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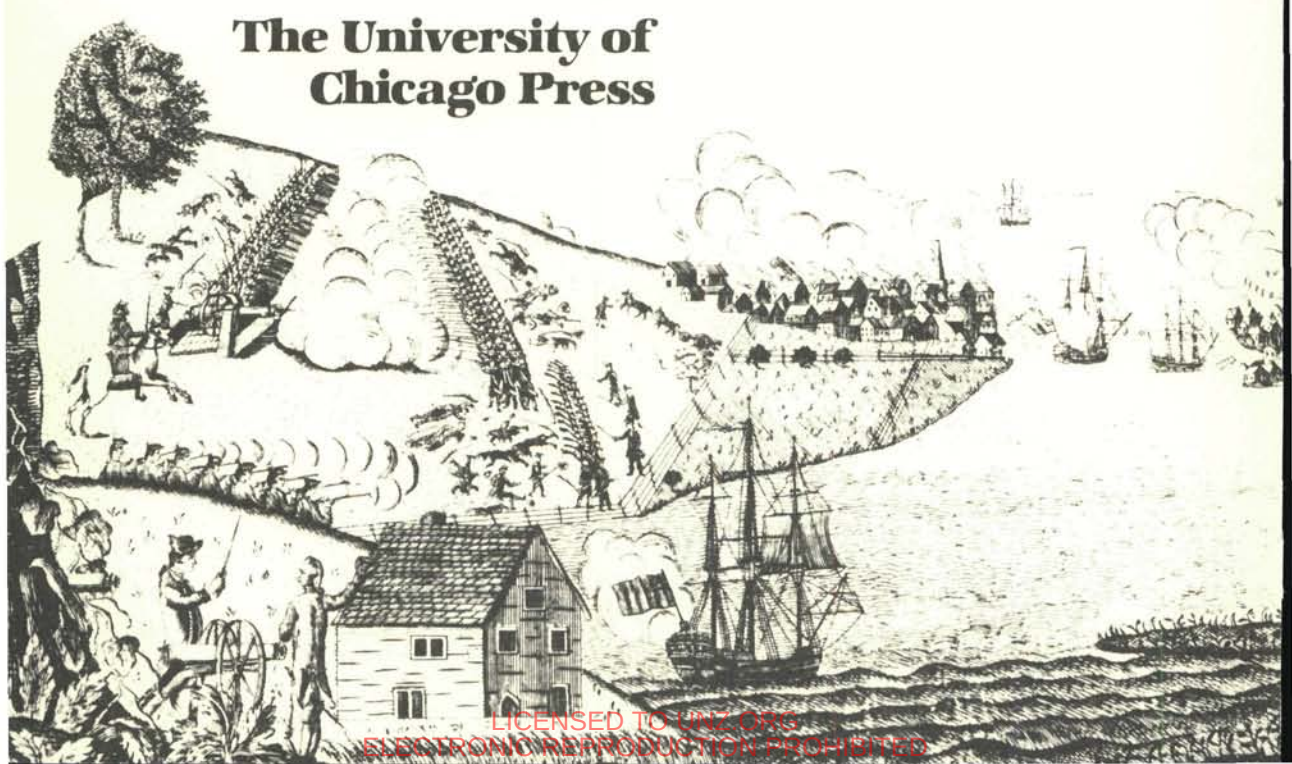

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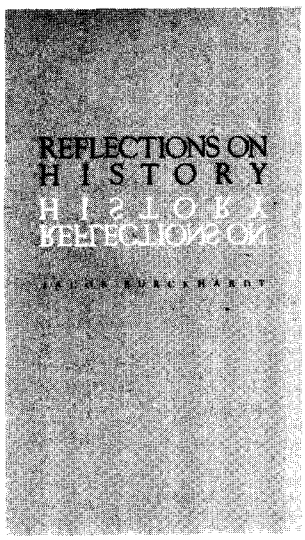

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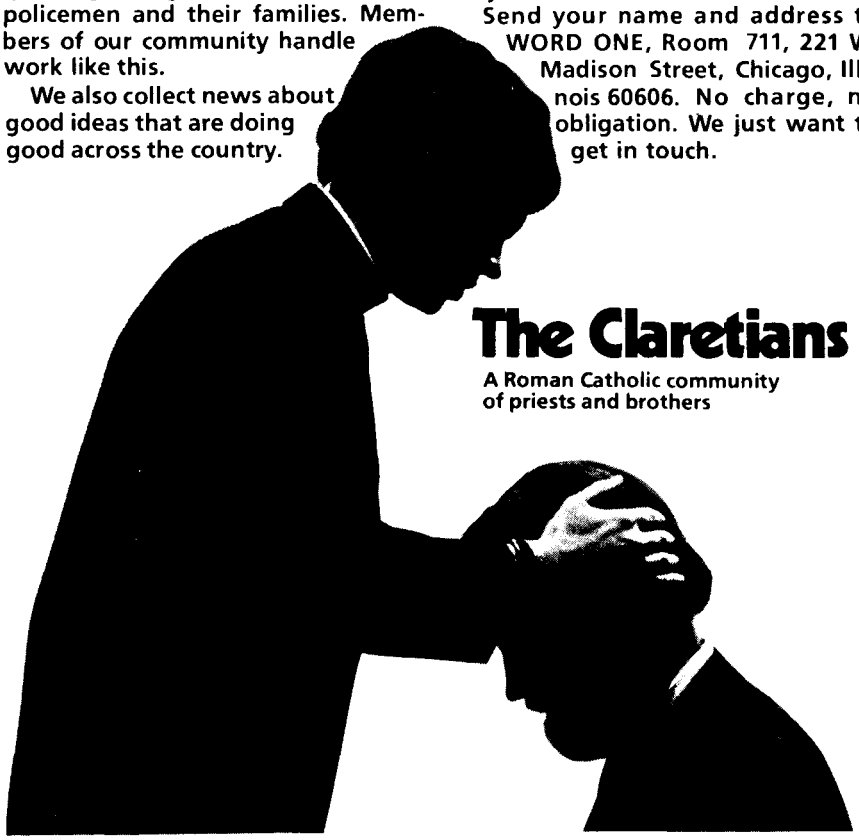

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You Take Manhattan

ARISTIDES

Over the years I have on several occasions been mistaken for a New Yorker. I am never quite sure how to take this. If the person who makes the mistake is himself a New Yorker, I generally take it as a compliment. It means, I have come to conclude, that he recognizes in me a certain suavity, the sophistication and quality of a cosmopolitan, none of which I have ever deigned to deny. But if the person who takes me for a New Yorker is not himself a New Yorker, I get a trifle nervous. What have I done, I wonder, to merit this accusation? Have I seemed too aggressive? Have I gone, somehow, too far? Have I, unbeknownst to myself, acquired an accent? New York and New Yorkers are subjects about which no one is neutral. "All right," John Dos Passos once remarked, in an entirely different context, "so we are two nations." And so indeed we remain today, two nations, New York and the rest of the country.

I had better say right off that I like New York and New Yorkers. I have family living in New York. As a younger man, I lived there myself for some three years. I go to New York on business two or three times a year. I have in recent years even gone to New York for pleasure: to shop, to look in at the Frick Museum, to breakfast in the Edwardian Room of the Plaza. The city's energy never ceases to excite me. The faces of New Yorkers are more impressive than those of people in other cities—more lively, more expressive, more flushed with expectation. Even among people who talk to themselves—of whom New York surely has greater numbers than any other city—New Yorkers seem to have more interesting conversations. ("He fools with me," I heard a man walking up 48th Street mutter to himself on my last trip there. "I'll cut his heart out.") In no other city do people seem so got up, so frankly sexual—and I do not refer here alone to the *gayim*, as a friend of mine refers to the resurgent homosexual community—so ready to go. In no other city are there so many shoe stores. It may be the last city in which a man can wear an ascot with a straight face.

New York is a world city, the only one in the United States. Saul Bellow has called it a European city, but of no known country. Over the years it has been fortunate in receiving ever fresh infusions of foreigners, having long ago been the first port of call from Europe, and no small part of its pleasures has been the cacophony of foreign accents and styles on exhibition there. British publishers, White Russian grandes dames, French agents, Israeli folksingers, Arabs with large digital wristwatches, Japanese without cameras—all are likely to be encountered in the same elevator in a New York hotel. On one corner in New York I have had my custom invited to a massage parlor and on the next corner I have been handed a small pamphlet invoking me to keep kosher, while in the middle of the block a five-piece steel band is playing African songs. New York, as befits a world city, is a polyglottony.

When I say New York, I of course mean Manhattan, the island thirteen miles long and two-and-a-half miles across at its widest point (which is 86th Street). Technically, New York's boroughs are part of New York, but spiritually they are not at all the same. Brooklyn might as well be part of Chicago, the Bronx part of Detroit, Queens of St. Louis. Manhattan, for both better and worse, is different. Norman Podhoretz, in the opening chapter of his book *Making It*, puts it well when he writes, "One of the longest journeys in the world is the journey from Brooklyn to Manhattan—or at least from certain neighborhoods in Brooklyn to certain parts of Manhattan." Manhattan for many people, especially the young and ambitious, is goal and

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consummation. "To Moscow! To Moscow! To Moscow!" cries Irina at the close of act 2 of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*. Manhattan is America's Moscow, the city of allure, possibility, promise.

To Manhattan! To Manhattan! To Manhattan! This advice I imbibed as a young man. If one wanted to make it, then Manhattan was indisputably the place. Succeed in Manhattan, where the competition was fiercest, and one could succeed anywhere. I believed this then, and believe it still. I first traveled to Manhattan alone for a few days of theater going during the spring holidays of my junior year at college. In unseasonably warm weather I sat in a wool suit of olive drab on two consecutive nights, watching, back to back, Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *The Iceman Cometh*—not exactly a surefire recipe for glee. But the city itself swept me up and away. I was not the first pilgrim to feel like this. There is, in fact, almost a tradition of excitation at the prospect of going to New York. Here, in 1915, is Theodore Dreiser, in his autobiographical novel *The Genius*, describing feelings about New York that were not so different from my own or those of thousands of other young men and women at their first encounter with the city:

> He went about this early relationship to the city in the right spirit. For a little while he did not try to think what he would do, but struck out and walked here, there and everywhere, this very first day down Broadway to the City Hall and up Broadway from 14th to 42nd street the same night. Soon he knew all Third Avenue and the Bowery, the wonders of Fifth Avenue and Riverside Drive, the beauties of the East River, the Battery, Central Park and the lower East Side. He sought out quickly the wonders of metropolitan life—its crowds at dinner and theatre time in Broadway, its tremendous throngs morning and afternoon in the shopping district. . . . He had marveled at wealth and luxury in Chicago, but here it took his breath away. It was obviously so much more fixed, so definite and comprehensible. Here one felt instinctively the far reaches which separate the ordinary man from the scion of wealth. It curled him up like a frozen leaf, dulled his very soul, and gave him a clear sense of his position in the social scale. He had come here with a pretty high estimate of himself, but daily, as he looked, he felt himself crumbling. What was he? What was art? What did the city care? It was much more interested in other things, in dressing, eating, visiting, riding abroad. The lower part of the island was filled with cold commercialism which frightened him. In the upper half, which concerned only women and show—a voluptuous sybaritism—caused him envy. He had but two hundred dollars with which to fight his way, and this was the world he must conquer.

No Dreiserian hero, I did not want to conquer but only to belong, to be part of the scene. So at the end of my college days, I packed up my olive drab suit and other clothes, brought along all the novels of Joseph Conrad, and, with six hundred dollars in funds, moved to New York. I did not move to Manhattan but instead took a large furnished room in Brooklyn Heights, on Willow Street, not far down from the house in which W. H. Auden, Benjamin Britten, Carson McCullers, and Truman Capote had once lived; Norman Mailer was living in Brooklyn Heights at that time. Willow Street was quiet and even rather elegant, providing that combination of privacy and loneliness in which New York specializes. The river was only a few blocks away. Alongside it one could sit on a bench and gaze upon the man-made alp that is Manhattan.

Directly on my arrival, I sat down and wrote to the editors of *The New Yorker, Esquire*, and *Harper's*, putting them on notice that I was in town and available to improve their respective journals. While awaiting their replies, I daily boarded the subway to Manhattan and walked its streets, glittering and grubby alike. I discovered an employment agency given over exclusively to finding jobs in editorial enterprises. I roamed the bookstores of Fourth Avenue. I haunted the streets of the Village. I ate occasional dinners at a restaurant called Paddy's Clam House, sitting at long tables among strangers amid the clatter of the shells of crustaceans who had made the supreme sacrifice. I ventured out to Queens to visit one set of cousins, and out to Coney Island to visit another. *The New Yorker, Esquire,* and *Harper's* were clearly having a difficult time finding exactly the right place for me. Meanwhile I registered at the editorial employment agency.

"The girls here are wonderful this summer," he announced when I phoned him. He had been a law student at the university I had

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gone to, and I had been attracted to him by that manic energy that I had come to think of as peculiarly New Yorkish. (Fifty years before, writing of New York in *The American Scene*, Henry James referred to "the vehemence of local life.") His opening remark was characteristic. He invited me for dinner that night at his parents' apartment on East 88th Street. When I appeared at the door, he greeted me by informing me that he had flunked out of law school and so things were a trifle tense at home at the moment. I had not been in the apartment ten minutes before he and his younger brother had a punch-up over a borrowed shirt. When his mother came in to break it up, he said: "All right, but no more threats of suicide, Mother. Your threats are growing tiresome. Either do it, for God's sake, or shut up about it." At table he directed his attention to me, largely ignoring his family. When he didn't respond to something his father said, his father—a very successful lawyer, noted for dealing in theatrical and musical copyrights—added in a loud voice: "You really ought to listen to me, Robert. I might have something valuable to say. I, at least, was able to get through law school." To which he rejoined, "I, at least, haven't been drunk since noon." His father's response to this was to throw the contents of his drink across the table at his son, most of which landed on me. I recall delicately extracting an ice cube from my mashed potatoes. Things were a trifle tense, no question about it. Yet, although extreme, this scene, too, seemed to me a part of New York—the down side of the manic energy.

Not having heard from any of the magazines I wanted to work for, I began to interview for jobs on magazines I had no interest even in reading. One warm morning I arrived to interview for a job as an editorial assistant on a trade journal that had to do with dental supplies, and found some fifteen people ahead of me, most of them quite a bit older than I. This was the camel that broke the straw's back. That afternoon I looked up the name Edmund Wilson in the Manhattan telephone directory, intending to ask him for advice about conducting a literary career. Whether this was the same Edmund Wilson whose works I had read and so much admired I never discovered, for an older woman with a very formidable voice answered the phone, and I, atremble, hung up. Nor did I discover whether *The New Yorker, Esquire,* or *Harper's* ever answered my letters. My money was running low and, rather than invest in another month's rent, I left for home, discouraged but making an italicized mental note to return.

Some four years later I did return, with a pregnant wife and an infant son and a low-paying job on a political magazine. My first disappointment was that there was not enough money to live in Manhattan except under conditions of beastliness, which, with a family, I was loath to do. So we installed ourselves in an apartment in Queens, which meant a half-hour subway ride to and from work. ("... The religion of humanity is utterly unacceptable," noted Walter Lippmann, "to those who have to ride in the subways during rush hour.") Still, I did not mind. I didn't even much mind eating the foul Nedick's breakfast I began swallowing daily: a glass of orange drink, weak coffee, a donut (29¢). I learned to fold and read my *New York Times* on the subway amid an extremely clamorous humankind. Before long, I became a connoisseur of standard New York bumptious behavior: the scowl one receives when giving a clerk a ten-dollar bill; having a cab stolen out from under one in the rain; the general brusqueness of manner which makes all too real the joke about the Hoosier who, after two days in New York, asks a native of the city, "Excuse me, sir, could you tell me where the Empire State Building is, or would you prefer that I go screw myself?"

Such are the habits, customs, mores of New Yorkers that they really require a Malinowski, a first-class ethnographer, to record them properly. Take food. No one eats more quickly than do New Yorkers. Or with more variety. There may be better cities for food—Paris currently, Saigon before socialism—but none in North America. This comes in part out of the sheer demandingness of New Yorkers, but in part, too, out of their insistence in treating the dreariest luncheonette as if it were their mothers' altogether hospitable kitchens. I have never heard people order food as I have in New York. "Sam, fix me a sardine on rye, with a very thin slice of onion, and a light rinse of lemon, pickle on the side." Nor in any other city have I heard cus-

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tomers order food in the argot of a fry cook. "Sam, BLT down, hold the mayo, burgers a pair, c.b. on an onion, draw one white, shoot three, boots." (Translation: a bacon-lettuce-tomato sandwich on toast, no mayonnaise; two hamburgers; a corned-beef sandwich on an onion roll; coffee with milk, three cokes—all to take out.)

Antics of this kind come about because of the hyper-hastened pace of New York life. This pace, seeking always to cut away all that is extraneous in human relations, also results in a directness that can shock non–New Yorkers. A non–New Yorker, visiting one's apartment, might say, "My, what a nice place," then inquire about the number of rooms it has, ask if it gets good light, remark on the fireplace, question the lease arrangements. A New Yorker, on the other hand, is much more likely to say, "Nice place. What d'you pay?" Very up-front is one description of this behavior; extreme rudeness is another description of it. But, as with a car rounding a corner and splashing water on you, it is probably best not to take it personally.

Yet if New Yorkers are likely to ask for personal information, they also volunteer it more readily than one is ordinarily accustomed to. "How are you?" can be a dangerous question to ask a New Yorker: "How are you?" "I just ended a whirlwind affair." "How are you?" "My eighteen-year-old daughter is living with a man of fifty-seven." "How are you?" "I just changed shrinks." "How are you?" "My wife last week lost a job paying forty-two thousand dollars a year. How would you be?" There isn't, but there ought to be, a word for such unwonted (unwanted?) forthcomingness; perhaps it might be "candorous." Again, extremely personal though they are, such remarks are probably best not taken personally.

There are eight million stories in the naked city, and, before coming to New York to work, I had heard very few of them. I worked on 15th Street, off Union Square, in a building that housed a number of union agents and the old Rand School Library. Hasidic Jews and elderly Mensheviks pottered in and out of the building. In the library, men spent lifetimes getting up the material for books no one wanted to read. I met a jazz critic, a teacher of literature courses at the School of General Education at Columbia University, who referred to his job as "working the lounge at Columbia." More than half the people I came across were at work on a novel, or painted, or sang, or danced. A pants salesman in our apartment building gave up his line to take acting lessons. Accountants were sure to have been Trotskyists in their youth. The city sagged under the weight of aspiration. Yet all this aspiration gave New York an appealing aspect of hope and dreaminess.

The other side of this aspiration—a side that often puts off strangers—is the sheer appalling knowingness of New Yorkers. Delicatessen countermen offer stock market tips. Cabdrivers are flush with opinions on everything. (Agnes Repplier tells how, many years ago, she once entered a New York cab and announced, "I want to go to Brooklyn." "You mean," the driver corrected her, "you have to.") Even the New York bums seem a bit sharper than their confreres in other cities. I was once stopped on Waverly Place by a youngish panhandler who asked if he could have *all* my change. Thrown off balance by the originality of his request, I forked over a dollar and twenty cents. But for simple knowingness, for being simultaneously with it, inside it, and yet above it all, I shall never forget a man who one day sat in the chair alongside mine in a New York barbershop. When the barber asked him if he was going to that Sunday's pro football game, he said he hated crowds, and besides they piped the game into his club. Stock market looked bad, the barber said. He had got out last month, the man replied. Supposed to have snowstorms next week, the barber said. He couldn't care less, the man replied; he was off to Florida on Monday. If you told this man that his eyeballs had just dropped out, doubtless he would have responded, no sweat, he had another pair in the car. Clearly, here was a man who, even in hell, would have an air-conditioned room reserved.

In no other city does life seem such a perpetual balancing of debits and credits, of evils and virtues, as it does in New York. No other city seems so charming yet so crude, so civilized yet so uncouth. I recall once going out with two friends to bring back Chinese food from a splendid restaurant on upper Broadway. With the food in hand, we were stopped by a young Puerto Rican drugged to the hair-

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line who wanted the wristwatch worn by one of my friends. We were able to joke him out of it, but the prospect was fraught with danger. Such, paradigmatically, is New York: the prospect of the delight of first-class Chinese food, the danger of having a knife pulled on you while getting it home.

"East Side, West Side, all around the town," goes one of the lines from the song "The Sidewalks of New York," but much of the quality of one's days in Manhattan depends on which side of town one is in. I have a friend who, living in a spacious apartment on the West Side, had to use an elevator on whose interior door was scratched instructions for an anatomically impossible sex act. Each morning, setting out for work, he faced these instructions; each evening, returning from work, they would be awaiting him on his ride up. The effect of this, day after day, cannot have been to induce serenity.

Not that serenity has ever been a New York ideal. Glamour has been the ideal, the chic life, stylish and joyous. But while the glamour of New York can be very real, it is at best half the story. In the magazine *New York* one can see this ideal turned into a full-fledged myth. *New York*, read week in, week out, conveys the notion of what fun the city is, what unalloyed pleasures it offers: so much to do and see, so much to buy and try. What it leaves unsaid is that, to bring off the life promised in its pages, an income of roughly $80,000 a year (after taxes) is required, and probably $100,000 if you are married and have children. I have, for example, yet to meet anyone living in Manhattan whose children go to public schools. I recently met a man in his late forties with children from a first marriage still in school and an infant daughter from a second marriage, who reported to me that he figures to be paying private school fees continuously for more than forty years. "We'll turn Manhattan into an isle of joy," the old Rodgers and Hart song has it. Not quite.

Part of the problem that I had with Woody Allen's film *Manhattan* was its strict emphasis on the "isle of joy" side of New York life, even while attempting to show that modern life is unstable and empty—what I think of as the movie's Bergdorf Goodman existentialism. The mise-en-scène for the movie is all duplex apartments and Elaine's, pizzas and ice-cream cones in Central Park. There is one scene in the movie where Woody Allen and Diane Keaton spend an entire night on a park bench, awaiting the sunrise over the East River. Watching this scene, all I could think was, "Oh, my God, they're sure to be mugged"—as in life they doubtless would have been. W. H. Auden, who referred to himself as a New Yorker and never an American, would not leave his apartment on St. Mark's Place without carrying a five-dollar bill, lest a mugger, angry at finding him without money, beat him up all the worse.

Although New York is preeminently the city of anxiety, as Auden himself felt, where much indifference and misery lurk under and indeed above the surface, it can also sometimes seem the very center of the universe. A single New York sight, a meeting, an incident can make all that is twitchy, neurotic, febrile about the city disappear on the instant. I recall walking along Fifth Avenue one day on my lunch hour, my head filled with standard New York thoughts—scheming to find a better job, looking for a larger apartment, wondering where I might scare up more freelance work—when across my path stepped, lo, Cary Grant. He seemed a figure made of the finest leather, porcelain, and silver. Dazzling. Wonderful. Splendiferous. "I love it here," I said to myself. "I never want to leave."

For reasons too complicated and boring to go into, I did leave New York, though I thought I should one day become, as a number of my friends have, a naturalized New Yorker. This phenomenon of naturalized citizenship in a city is also exclusive, in America at least, to New York. True, people move out to California and become, in some rough sense, Californians. A much smaller number, who are usually associated with Harvard or MIT, fall in love with Cambridge; but not in the same intense way, it seems to me, that people become New Yorkers. Life outside New York is quite simply unthinkable to them, and in time they themselves become unthinkable outside New York. No amount of aggravation can flush them out of the purlieus of Manhattan; no prospects elsewhere, no matter how lush, will bring them to leave. If forced to it, they will give up the work they do, their marriages, their children rather than abandon New York.

When this love of New York takes a

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chauvinistic turn, which it frequently does with New Yorkers both born and naturalized, it tends to get under the skin of non–New Yorkers. Being in any other city, to true New Yorkers, is considered merely camping out, and they often too openly show it. A cosmopolitan is someone who is at home anywhere in the world. Most New Yorkers do not fit this definition, being only really at home in New York. The common charge against them is that in their point of view they are New York provincial. In one of his most brilliant drawings Saul Steinberg has caught this attitude precisely. I refer to that drawing—it originally appeared as a *New Yorker* cover—in which New York, from Ninth Avenue to the Hudson River, takes up all the foreground, with the world west of the Hudson given far less space than Ninth and Tenth Avenues. As I have said, New York sometimes seems as if it were the center of the universe, but to the New York provincial it *is* the center of the universe.

Even in its best days, New York has not been a narcotic that everyone could get high on. It has had its detractors, firm and fierce and famous. One of these was H. L. Mencken, who, in his essay "On Living in Baltimore," praised Baltimore by way of flogging New York. Mencken himself lived in the same house in Baltimore, the house he was born in, for nearly his entire life, and his chief complaint against New York was the transience of arrangements there. "What makes New York so dreadful, I believe," he wrote, "is mainly the fact that the vast majority of its people have been forced to rid themselves of one of the oldest and most powerful of human instincts—the instinct to make a permanent home." The average New Yorker, Mencken thought, was a vagabond. "He takes on the shallowness and unpleasantness of any other homeless man." True enough, it is difficult to imagine a New Yorker of the current day living in the same place for his entire life, let alone two generations of a family doing so. Years before Mencken, Henry James remarked that New York's buildings, even its skyscrapers, were "notes in the concert of the expensively provisional into which your supreme sense of New York resolves itself." In New York, transience has always been, in a word, permanent.

This state of permanent transience gives New York its jagged quality, its jumpy rhythms. Robert Benchley, in a comic piece entitled "So You're Going to New York," advises tourists to study points of interest, then adds, "Most of these will either have been torn down or closed." That was written in 1929, and things have only worsened since. To the regular tearing down and rebuilding of patches of the city has been added every sort of strike: of newspapers, garbage collectors, transit workers. Then in recent years, the city actually went, as the boys on Wall Street say, belly-up—kaput, tap city, bankrupt. Yet New Yorkers play through. Life in New York is assumed to be not business but chaos as usual.

The chaos of New York has had odd literary consequences. Although no other American city has had more writers among its denizens, there is not now, nor has there ever been, a novelist of New York in the way that Dickens was the novelist of London or Balzac the novelist of Paris. Different novelists have carved out different parts of New York, from Edith Wharton to Isaac Bashevis Singer, but none has ever taken on the city whole. Even Henry James, self-described as "the restless analyst," felt that New York was altogether too changeable, too volatile, to stand still long enough for literary analysis. In *The American Scene* James writes: "On New York soil . . . one is almost impudently cheated by any part of the show that pretends to prolong its actuality or to rest on its present basis. Since every part, however blazingly new, fails to affect us as doing more than hold the ground for something else, some conceit of the bigger dividend, that is still to come, so we may bind up the aesthetic wound, I think, quite as promptly as we feel it open."

A less refined view—my own, actually—holds that New York is a damnably difficult place for getting the chair up to the desk, always the first step in literary composition. Walt Whitman once called New York "a good market for the harvest but a bad place for farming." For myself, I never scribbled less than when I lived in New York. Most writers I know who live there tend to do their work on extended compositions—novels, memoirs, biographies, histories—outside New York: in summer spas in the Hamptons or on Martha's Vineyard, or at Yaddo or the MacDowell and other writers' colonies. New York

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offers too many distractions for sustained work; too much else is going on; things are too agitated. Even now, at the conclusion of my two- or three-day business trips to New York, I unfailingly return with a stiff case of what the French call *le surmenage intellectuel*, or brain fag, mental exhaustion.

New York must be the most talky city on earth, and I wonder if this talkativeness isn't related to New York's being so Jewish a city. William Cobbett objected to London because it had so many Jews, Quakers, and readers of the *Edinburgh Review*. New York has few Quakers and no readers of the *Edinburgh Review*, but Jews in plenty. Second only to Tel Aviv, I seem to have read somewhere, New York has more Jews than any other city in the world. In *The 42nd Parallel*, the first novel in his *U.S.A.* trilogy, John Dos Passos has Janey Williams, his sad little stenographer, remark upon her arrival in New York, "but everyone looked Jewish." This is not a bad observation, for in time everyone in New York does come to look Jewish, including most non-Jews. After a while the horses pulling cabs in Central Park look Jewish; even the eggs Benedict come to look Jewish. Say what you like about the Jews—though not around me, please, who am myself Jewish—but they are rarely dull. Get two Jews together, an old proverb has it, and you are certain to discover three arguments.

However much Jews lend to the spirit of contemporary New York, even Jewish vivacity and powers of endurance can be defeated by the city. On my last trip to New York, I drove in from LaGuardia with a cabdriver named Alexander Zemonovitch, a Soviet Jew who had been living in New York for the past four years. In his middle twenties, bright and linguistically talented, he lived with a wife and young son in Brooklyn. He had left the Soviet Union on his own at eighteen, stopping en route in Italy for three years, and while he was very glad to be out of the Soviet Union, much of his conversation was about how difficult life in New York could be—this from a man who had grown up in a country whose leaders habitually treat its populace as if it were a conquered people. Still, one knows what he means. New York is a tough city to crack. Alexander Zemonovitch viewed himself as cut out for better things than driving a cab; yet, with a family and the expensiveness of New York, he was, for the time being, locked in. Day-to-day life in New York is a struggle.

I see New York only as a visitor, and usually an expense-account one at that, but there are times when the costliness of the city takes my breath away. A room for two at a good, though not top, hotel runs between $84 and $100. I recently met a friend at the Palm Court in the Plaza, where we had a pot of tea and two pieces of cheese cake; the bill, before tip, was $12.80. Why, I wondered, $12.80? Why not $37.15? Or $72.40? Trips to New York forced me, an economic puritan, to acquire an American Express card, for in visiting New York I could never be certain how much money I would need; and nowadays, to ring a change on the American Express commercial, I'd sooner leave home without me. But this costliness is part of the vigorish that New York extracts from visitors and natives alike. The priciness of the place is part of the dues that come with living in a world city, and what is of interest is the number of people who are willing to pay them.

"I should think," wrote Justice Holmes to Lewis Einstein, when the latter was thinking of settling in New York at the end of his diplomatic career, "New York would be disagreeable unless one were rich or beginning a career." As one who is neither rich nor beginning a career, I tend to agree with Holmes's remark, and increasingly over the years I have begun to find New York's splendors outweighed by its horrors. Not that I am able to hold this view consistently. Sometimes New York seems nothing less than the treasure house in which all our culture's prizes are stored. Sometimes it seems nothing less than decline and fall made flesh, and I find, walking the city's streets, that I am unable to make a first-and-ten without passing a woman weeping, a man stirring around in garbage, or some other episode of human sadness and dilapidation. As a friend of mine, a naturalized New Yorker in my estate—neither rich nor beginning a career—has put it: "You either develop the calluses needed for this city when you're young or it's quite an impossible place to live in." I thought I had developed the necessary calluses, but apparently I had not. I now no longer think that I can live in New York.

Yet I wonder if it is New York or I that

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has changed. Jan Morris, writing in *Rolling Stone*, reports that people believe New York reached its zenith between the Depression and the end of World War II. But literary evidence suggests otherwise. Thus, Edith Wharton, writing in 1906, notes that the New York of her youth, in the 1870s and 1880s, was a very special place, but it is finished now. Theodore Dreiser, writing in the early 1920s, notes that New York, when he arrived there in 1906, was a very colorful place, but it is all quite drab now. F. Scott Fitzgerald, writing in 1932, comments that New York, when he came to live there in the early 1920s, was a glamorous place, but it is so no longer. Saul Bellow, who remembers the New York of his young manhood as a city of intellectual excitement, says of it today, "It depresses me—there's such a sense of malignancy and despair." Fitzgerald, in his essay "My Lost City," described coming upon the young Edmund Wilson out for his afternoon walk in Manhattan as embodying Fitzgerald's idea of the "Metropolitan spirit." But in his last letter to Vladimir Nabokov, in 1971, Edmund Wilson writes, "We are eager to leave New York, which is now absolute hell. I don't know whether I can bring myself ever to come here again."

New York, as I think the above makes plain, is, if not quite a metaphor for youth, then best seen through youthful eyes. I am still far from achieving Edmund Wilson's utter disdain for the place, but already New York is coming to seem too tumultuous, too obstacle-laden, simply too much. I no longer harbor fantasies of returning to the city rich and famous—a small ticker-tape parade in my honor, standing applause as I walk into Sardi's, no argument or dirty look when I pay a cabdriver with a twenty. Does this mean that my own youth, belatedly and yet finally, is now over? I do not much cotton to the notion that the needle of my thoughts about New York is now stuck on that dreariest of clichés about the city—that it is a nice place to visit but, thank you very much, I shouldn't care to live there. "The man who is tired of London," said Dr. Johnson, "is tired of life." The same, I suspect, is true of New York. That worries me. So when I say, as I do now, "You take Manhattan," I can only say it equivocally, with regret, considerable self-doubt, and no real pleasure in the rejection.

Alexander

FREDERICK MORGAN

Alexander cut the knot,
couldn't be bothered to untie it:
he wasn't good at solving riddles,
wouldn't even try it.

His adolescent blade addressed
the ancient hide and pierced clean through it.
Triumphantly he failed the test
and never even knew it.

✪ FREDERICK MORGAN's books of poetry include *A Book of Change, Death Mother & Other Poems,* and *Poems of the Two Worlds.* He is co-editor of the *Hudson Review.*

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Mankind's Better Moments

BARBARA W. TUCHMAN

FOR A CHANGE FROM PREVAILING PESSIMISM, I should like to recall some of the positive and even admirable capacities of the human race. We hear very little of them lately. Ours is not a time of self-esteem or self-confidence—as was, for instance, the nineteenth century, when self-esteem may be seen oozing from its portraits. Victorians, especially the men, pictured themselves as erect, noble, and splendidly handsome. Our self-image looks more like Woody Allen or a character from Samuel Beckett. Amid a mass of worldwide troubles and a poor record for the twentieth century, we see our species—with cause—as functioning very badly, as blunderers when not knaves, as violent, ignoble, corrupt, inept, incapable of mastering the forces that threaten us, weakly subject to our worst instincts: in short, decadent.

The catalogue is familiar and valid, but it is growing tiresome. A study of history reminds one that mankind has its ups and downs and during the ups has accomplished many brave and beautiful things, exerted stupendous endeavors, explored and conquered oceans and wilderness, achieved marvels of beauty in the creative arts and marvels of science and social progress; has loved liberty with a passion that throughout history has led men to fight and die for it over and over again; has pursued knowledge, exercised reason, enjoyed laughter and pleasures, played games with zest, shown courage, heroism, altruism, honor, and decency; experienced love; known comfort, contentment, and occasionally happiness. All these qualities have been part of human experience, and if they have not had as important notice as the negatives nor exerted as wide and persistent an influence as the evils we do, they nevertheless deserve attention, for they are currently all but forgotten.

Among the great endeavors, we have in our own time carried men to the moon and brought them back safely—surely one of the most remarkable achievements in history. Some may disapprove of the effort as unproductive, too costly, and a wrong choice of priorities in relation to greater needs, all of which may be true but does not, as I see it, diminish the achievement. If you look carefully, all positives have a negative un-

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derside—sometimes more, sometimes less—and not all admirable endeavors have admirable motives. Some have sad consequences. Although most signs presently point from bad to worse, human capacities are probably what they have always been. If primitive man could discover how to transform grain into bread, and reeds growing by the riverbank into baskets; if his successors could invent the wheel, harness the insubstantial air to turn a millstone, transform sheep's wool, flax, and worms' cocoons into fabric—we, I imagine, will find a way to manage the energy problem.

Consider how the Dutch accomplished the miracle of making land out of sea. By progressive enclosure of the Zuider Zee over the last sixty years, they have added half a million acres to their country, enlarging its area by 8 percent and providing homes, farms, and towns for close to a quarter of a million people. The will to do the impossible, the spirit of can-do that overtakes our species now and then, was never more manifest than in this earth-altering act by the smallest of the major European nations.

A low-lying, windswept, waterlogged land, partly below sea level, pitted with marshes, rivers, lakes, and inlets, sliding all along its outer edge into the stormy North Sea with only fragile sand dunes as nature's barrier against the waves, Holland, in spite of physical disadvantages, has made itself into one of the most densely populated, orderly, prosperous, and, at one stage of its history, dominant nations of the West. For centuries, ever since the first inhabitants, fleeing enemy tribes, settled in the bogs where no one cared to bother them, the Dutch struggled against water and learned how to live with it: building on mounds, constructing and reconstructing seawalls of clay mixed with straw, carrying mud in an endless train of baskets, laying willow mattresses weighted with stones, repairing each spring the winter's damage, draining marshes, channeling streams, building ramps to their attics to save the cattle in times of flood, gaining dike-enclosed land from the waves in one place and losing as much to the revengeful ocean somewhere else, progressively developing methods to cope with their eternal antagonist.

The Zuider Zee was a tidal gulf penetrating eighty miles into the land over an area ten to thirty miles wide. The plan to close off the sea by a dam across the entire mouth of the gulf had long been contemplated but never adopted, for fear of the cost, until a massive flood in 1916, which left saltwater standing on all the farmlands north of Amsterdam, forced the issue. The act for enclosure was passed unanimously by both houses of Parliament in 1918. As large in ambition as the country was small, the plan called for a twenty-mile dike from shore to shore, rising twenty feet above sea level, wide enough at the top to carry an auto road and housing for the hydraulic works, and as much as six hundred

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feet wide on the sea bottom. The first cartload of gravel was dumped in 1920.

The dike was but part of the task. The inland sea it formed had to be drained of its saltwater and transformed from salt to fresh by the inflow from lower branches of the Rhine. Four great polders of land in the shallow areas would be lifted by the draining process from under water into the open air. Secondary dikes, pumping stations, sluices, drainage ditches to control the inflow, as well as locks and inland ports for navigation, had to be built, the polder lands restored to fertility, trees planted, roads, bridges, and rural and urban housing constructed, the whole scheduled for completion in sixty years.

The best laid plans of engineers met errors and hazards. During construction, gravel that had been painstakingly dumped within sunken frameworks would be washed away in a night by heavy currents or a capricious storm. Means proved vulnerable, methods sometimes unworkable. Yet slowly the dike advanced from each shore toward the center. As the gap narrowed, the pressure of the tidal current rushing through increased daily in force, carrying away material at the base, undermining the structure, and threatening to prevent a final closing. In the last days, a herd of floating derricks, dredges, barges, and every piece of available equipment was mustered at the spot and fill was desperately poured in before the next return of the tide, due in twelve hours. At this point, gale winds were reported moving in. The check dam to protect the last gap showed signs of giving way; operations were hurriedly moved thirty yards inward. Suspense was now extreme. Roaring and foaming with sand, the tide threw itself upon the narrowing passage; the machines closed in, filled the last space in the dike, and it held. Men stood that day in 1932 where the North Sea's waves had held dominion for seven hundred years.

As the dry land appeared, the first comers to take possession were the birds. Gradually, decade by decade, crops, homes, and civilization followed, and unhappily, too, man's destructive intervention. In World War II, the retreating Germans blew up a section of the dike, completely flooding the western polder, but by the end of the year the Dutch had pumped it dry, resowed the fields in the spring, and over the next seven years restored the polder's farms and villages. Weather, however, is never conquered. The disastrous floods of 1953 laid most of coastal Holland under water. The Dutch dried themselves out and, while the work at Zuider Zee continued, applied its lessons elsewhere and lent their hydraulic skills to other countries. Today, the *Afsluitdijk*, or Zuider Zee road, is a normal thoroughfare. To drive across it between the sullen ocean on one side and new land on the other is for that moment to feel optimism for the human race.

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Great endeavor requires vision and some kind of compelling impulse, not necessarily practical as in the case of the Dutch, but sometimes less definable, more exalted, as in the case of the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages. The architectural explosion that produced this multitude of soaring vaults—arched, ribbed, pierced with jeweled light, studded with thousands of figures of the stone-carvers' art—represents in size, splendor, and numbers one of the great, permanent artistic achievements of human hands. What accounts for it? Not religious fervor alone but the zeal of a dynamic age, a desire to outdo, an ambition for the biggest and the best. Only the general will, shared by nobles, merchants, guilds, artisans, and commoners, could command the resources and labor to sustain so great an undertaking. Each group contributed donations, especially the magnates of commerce, who felt relieved thereby from the guilt of moneymaking. Voluntary work programs involved all classes. "Who has ever seen or heard tell in times past," wrote an observer, "that powerful princes of the world, that men brought up in honors and wealth, that nobles—men and women—have bent their haughty necks to the harness of carts and, like beasts of burden, have dragged to the abode of Christ these wagons loaded with wines, grains, oil, stones, timber and all that is necessary for the construction of the church?"

Abbot Suger, whose renovation of Saint-Denis is considered the start of Gothic architecture, embodied the spirit of the builders. Determined to create the most splendid basilica in Christendom, he supervised every aspect of the work from fund raising to decoration, and caused his name to be inscribed for immortality on keystones and capitals. He lay awake worrying, as he tells us, where to find trees large enough for the beams, and went personally with his carpenters to the forest to question the woodcutters under oath. When they swore that nothing of the kind he wanted could be found in the area, he insisted on searching for them himself and, after nine hours of scrambling through thorns and thickets, succeeded in locating and marking twelve trees of the necessary size.

Mainly the compelling impulse lay in the towns where, in those years, economic and political strengths and wealth were accumulating. Amiens, the thriving capital of Picardy, decided to build the largest church in France, "higher than all the saints, higher than all the kings." For the necessary space, the hospital and bishop's palace had to be relocated and the city walls moved back. At the same time, Beauvais, a neighbor town, raised a vault over the crossing of transept and nave to an unprecedented height of 158 feet, the apogee of architects' daring in its day. It proved too daring, for the height of the columns and spread of the supports caused the vault to collapse after twelve years. Repaired with undaunted purpose, it was defiantly topped by a spire rising 492 feet above ground, the tallest in France. Beauvais, having used up its re-

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sources, never built the nave, leaving a structure foreshortened but glorious. The interior is a fantasy of soaring space; to enter is to stand dazed in wonder, breathless in admiration.

The higher and lighter grew the buildings and the slenderer the columns, the more new expedients and techniques had to be devised to hold them up. Buttresses flew like angels' wings against the exteriors. This was a period of innovation and audacity, and a limitless spirit of excelsior. In a single century, from 1170 to 1270, six hundred cathedrals and major churches were built in France alone. In England in that period, the cathedral of Salisbury, with the tallest spire in the country, was completed in thirty-eight years. The spire of Freiburg in Germany was constructed entirely of filigree in stone as if spun by some supernatural spider. In the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris the fifteen miraculous windows swallow the walls; they have become the whole.

Embellishment was integral to the construction. Reims is populated by five thousand statues of saints, prophets, kings and cardinals, bishops, knights, ladies, craftsmen and commoners, devils, animals and birds. Every type of leaf known in northern France is said to appear in the decoration. In carving, stained glass, and sculpture the cathedrals displayed the art of medieval hands, and the marvel of these buildings is permanent even when they no longer play a central role in everyday life. Rodin said he could feel the beauty and presence of Reims even at night when he could not see it. "Its power," he wrote, "transcends the senses so that the eye sees what it sees not."

Explanations for the extraordinary burst that produced the cathedrals are several. Art historians will tell you that it was the invention of the ribbed vault. Religious historians will say it was the product of an age of faith which believed that with God's favor anything was possible; in fact it was not a period of untroubled faith, but of heresies and Inquisition. Rather, one can only say that conditions were right. Social order under monarchy and the towns was replacing the anarchy of the barons, so that existence was no longer merely a struggle to stay alive but allowed a surplus of goods and energies and greater opportunity for mutual effort. Banking and commerce were producing capital, roads were making possible wheeled transport, universities nourishing ideas and communication. It was one of history's high tides, an age of vigor, confidence, and forces converging to quicken the blood.

Even when the historical tide is low, a particular group of doers may emerge in exploits that inspire awe. Shrouded in the mists of the eighth century, long before the cathedrals, Viking seamanship was a wonder of daring, stamina, and skill. Pushing relentlessly outward in open boats, the Vikings sailed south, around Spain to North Africa and Arabia, north

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to the top of the world, west across uncharted seas to American coasts. They hauled their boats overland from the Baltic to make their way down Russian rivers to the Black Sea. Why? We do not know what engine drove them, only that it was part of the human endowment.

What of the founding of our own country, America? We take the *Mayflower* for granted—yet think of the boldness, the enterprise, the determined independence, the sheer grit it took to leave the known and set out across the sea for the unknown where no houses or food, no stores, no cleared land, no crops or livestock, none of the equipment or settlement of organized living awaited.

Equally bold was the enterprise of the French in the northern forests of the American continent, who throughout the seventeenth century explored and opened the land from the Saint Lawrence to the Mississippi, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. They came not for liberty like the Pilgrims, but for gain and dominion, whether in spiritual empire for the Jesuits or in land, glory, and riches for the agents of the king; and rarely in history have men willingly embraced such hardship, such daunting adventure, and persisted with such tenacity and endurance. They met hunger, exhaustion, frostbite, capture and torture by Indians, wounds and disease, dangerous rapids, swarms of insects, long portages, bitter weather, and hardly ever did those who suffered the experience fail to return, reenter the menacing but bountiful forest, and pit themselves once more against danger, pain, and death.

Above all others, the perseverance of La Salle in his search for the mouth of the Mississippi was unsurpassed. While preparing in Quebec, he mastered eight Indian languages. From then on he suffered accidents, betrayals, desertions, losses of men and provisions, fever and snow blindness, the hostility and intrigues of rivals who incited the Indians against him and plotted to ambush or poison him. He was truly pursued, as Francis Parkman wrote, by "a demon of havoc." Paddling through heavy waves in a storm over Lake Ontario, he waded through freezing surf to beach the canoes each night, and lost guns and baggage when a canoe was swamped and sank. To lay the foundations of a fort above Niagara, frozen ground had to be thawed by boiling water. When the fort was at last built, La Salle christened it *Crèvecoeur*—that is, Heartbreak. It earned the name when in his absence it was plundered and deserted by its half-starved mutinous garrison. Farther on, a friendly Indian village, intended as a destination, was found laid waste by the Iroquois with only charred stakes stuck with skulls standing among the ashes, while wolves and buzzards prowled through the remains.

When at last, after four months' hazardous journey down the Great River, La Salle reached the sea, he formally took possession in the name of Louis XIV of all the country from the river's mouth to its source and

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of its tributaries—that is, of the vast basin of the Mississippi from the Rockies to the Appalachians—and named it Louisiana. The validity of the claim, which seems so hollow to us (though successful in its own time), is not the point. What counts is the conquest of fearful adversity by one man's extraordinary exertions and inflexible will.

Happily, man has a capacity for pleasure too, and in contriving ways to entertain and amuse himself has created brilliance and delight. Pageants, carnivals, festivals, fireworks, music, dancing and drama, parties and picnics, sports and games, the comic spirit and its gift of laughter—all the range of enjoyment from grand ceremonial to the quiet solitude of a day's fishing has helped to balance the world's infelicity.

The original Olympic Games held every fourth year in honor of Zeus was the most celebrated festival of classic times, of such significance to the Greeks that they dated their history from the first games in 776 B.C. as we date ours from the birth of Christ. The crown of olive awarded to the winner in each contest was considered the crown of happiness. While the Romans took this to be a sign of the essential frivolity of the Greek character, the ancient games endured for twelve centuries, a longer span than the supremacy of Rome.

Homo ludens, man at play, is surely as significant a figure as man at war or at work. In human activity the invention of the ball may be said to rank with the invention of the wheel. Imagine America without baseball, Europe without soccer, England without cricket, the Italians without bocci, China without Ping-Pong, and tennis for no one. Even stern John Calvin, the examplar of Puritan self-denial, was once discovered playing bowls on Sunday, and in 1611 an English supply ship arriving at Jamestown found the starving colonists suppressing their misery in the same game. Cornhuskings, logrollings, barn raisings, horse races, and wrestling and boxing matches have engaged America as, somewhat more passively, the armchair watching of football and basketball does today.

Play was invented for diversion, exertion, and escape from routine cares. In colonial New York, sleighing parties preceded by fiddlers on horseback drove out to country inns, where, according to a participant, "we danced, sang, romped, ate and drank and kicked away care from morning to night." John Audubon, present at a barbecue and dance on the Kentucky frontier, wrote, "Every countenance beamed with joy, every heart leaped with gladness . . . care and sorrow were flung to the winds."

Play has its underside, too, in the gladiatorial games, in cockfights and prizefights, which arouse one of the least agreeable of human characteristics, pleasure in blood and brutality, but in relation to play as a whole, this is minor.

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Much of our pleasure derives from eating and sex, two components which have received an excess of attention in our time—allowing me to leave them aside as understood, except to note how closely they are allied. All those recipes, cuisines, exotic foods, and utensils of kitchen chic seem to proliferate in proportion to pornography, sex therapy, blue movies, and instructive tales for children on pederasty and incest. Whether this twin increase signifies decadence or liberation is disputable. Let us move on to other ground.

To the carnival, for instance. Mardi Gras in all its forms is an excuse for letting go; for uninhibited fun before the abstinence of Lent; for dressing up, playacting, cavorting in costumes and masks, constructing imaginative floats; for noise, pranks, jokes, battles of flowers and confetti, balls and banquets, singing and dancing, and fireworks. In the Belgian carnival of Gilles-Binche, originating in the sixteenth century in honor of Charles V's conquest of Peru, the dancers are spectacular in superlatively tall feather headdresses representing the Incas, and brilliant costumes trimmed with gold lace and tinkling bells. They wear wooden shoes to stamp out the rhythm of their dance and carry baskets of oranges symbolizing the treasures of Peru with which they pelt the onlookers. In the celebrated Palio of Siena at harvesttime, a horse and rider from each neighborhood race madly around a sloping cobblestoned course in the public square, while the citizens shriek in passionate rivalry. Walpurgis Night on the eve of Mayday is an excuse for bacchanalia in the guise of witches' revels; winter's festival at Christmas is celebrated by gift giving. Humanity has invented infinite ways to enjoy itself.

No people have invented more ways than have the Chinese, perhaps to balance floods, famine, warlords, and other ills of fate. The clang of gongs, clashing of cymbals, and beating of drums sound through their long history. No month is without fairs and theatricals when streets are hung with fantasies of painted lanterns and crowded with "carriages that flow like water, horses like roaming dragons." Night skies are illumined by firecrackers—a Chinese invention—bursting in the form of peonies, flowerpots, fiery devils. The ways of pleasure are myriad. Music plays in the air through bamboo whistles of different pitch tied to the wings of circling pigeons. To skim a frozen lake in an ice sleigh with a group of friends on a day when the sun is warm is rapture, like "moving in a cup of jade." What more delightful than the ancient festival called "Half an Immortal," when everyone from palace officials to the common man took a ride on a swing? When high in the air, one felt like an Immortal, when back to earth once again human—no more than to be for an instant a god.

In Europe's age of grandeur, princes devised pageants of dazzling splendor to express their magnificence, none more spectacular than the

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extravaganza of 1660 celebrating the marriage of Leopold I of Austria to the Infanta of Spain. As the climax to festivities lasting three months, an equestrian contest of the Four Elements was performed in the grand plaza, each element represented by a company of a thousand, gorgeously costumed. Water's company were dressed in blue and silver covered with fish scales and shells; Air's in gold brocade shaded in the colors of the rainbow; Earth's decorated with flowers; Fire's with curling flames. Neptune, surrounded by marine monsters and winds, rode in a car drawn by a huge whale spouting water. Earth's car contained a garden with Pan and shepherds, drawn by elephants with castles on their backs; Air rode a dragon escorted by thirty griffins; Fire was accompanied by Vulcan, thirty cyclopes, and a flame-spouting salamander. A rather irrelevant ship carrying the Argonauts to the Golden Fleece was added for extras. The contest was resolved when a star-studded globe, arched by an artificial rainbow representing Peace, rolled across the plaza and opened to display a Temple of Immortality from which emerged riders impersonating the fifteen previous Hapsburg emperors, ending with Leopold in person. Dressed as Glory, in silver lace and diamonds, and wearing his crown, he rode in a silver seashell drawn by eight white horses and carrying seven singers in jeweled robes, who serenaded the Infanta. Then followed the climactic equestrian ballet performed by four groups of eight cavaliers each, whose elaborate movements were marked by trumpet flourishes, kettledrums, and cannon salutes. In a grand finale, a thousand rockets blazed from two artificial mountains named Parnassus and Aetna, and the sky was lit in triumph by the Hapsburg acrostic AEIOU standing for *Austria Est Imperare Omne Universo*, meaning, approximately, "Austria rules the world."

The motive may have been self-aggrandizement, but the results were sumptuous and exciting; viewers were enthralled, performers proud, and the designer of the pageant was made a baron. It was a case of men and women engaged in the art of enjoyment, a function common to all times, although one would hardly know it from today's image of ourselves as wretched creatures forever agonizing over petty squalors of sex and drink as if we had no other recourse or destiny.

The greatest recourse, and mankind's most enduring achievement, is art. At its best, it reveals the nobility that coexists in human nature, along with flaws and evils, and the beauty and truth it can perceive. Whether in music or architecture, literature, painting or sculpture, art opens our eyes, ears, and feelings to something beyond ourselves, something we cannot experience without the artist's vision and the genius of his craft. The placing of Greek temples, like the Temple of Poseidon on the promontory at Sunion, outlined against the piercing blue of the Ae-

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gean Sea, Poseidon's home; the majesty of Michelangelo's sculptured figures in stone; Shakespeare's command of language and knowledge of the human soul; the intricate order of Bach, the enchantment of Mozart; the purity of Chinese monochrome pottery with its lovely names—celadon, oxblood, peach blossom, clair de lune; the exuberance of Tiepolo's ceilings where, without picture frames to limit movement, a whole world in exquisitely beautiful colors lives and moves in the sky; the prose and poetry of all the writers from Homer to Cervantes to Jane Austen and John Keats to Dostoevski and Chekhov—who made all these things? We—our species—did. The range is too vast and various to do justice to it in this space, but the random samples I have mentioned, and all the rest they suggest, are sufficient reason to honor mankind.

If we have (as I think) lost beauty and elegance in the modern world, we have gained much, through science and technology and democratic pressures, in the material well-being of the masses. The change in the lives of, and society's attitude toward, the working class marks the great divide between the modern world and the old regime. From the French Revolution through the brutal labor wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the change was earned mainly by force against fierce and often vicious opposition. While this was a harsh process, it developed and activated a social conscience hardly operative before. Slavery, beggary, unaided misery, and want have, on the whole, been eliminated in the developed nations of the West. That much is a credit in the human record, even if the world is uglier as a result of adapting to mass values. History generally arranges these things so that gain is balanced by loss, perhaps in order not to make the gods jealous.

The material miracles wrought by science and technology—from the harnessing of steam and electricity to anesthesia, antisepsis, antibiotics, and woman's liberator, the washing machine, and all the labor savers that go with it—are too well recognized in our culture to need my emphasis. Pasteur is as great a figure in the human record as Michelangelo or Mozart—probably, as far as the general welfare is concerned, greater. We are more aware of his kind of accomplishment than of those less tangible. Ask anyone to suggest the credits of mankind and the answer is likely to start with physical things. Yet the underside of scientific progress is prominent and dark. The weaponry of war in its ever-widening capacity to kill is the deadly example, and who is prepared to state with confidence that the overall effect of the automobile, airplane, telephone, television, and computer has been, on balance, beneficent?

Pursuit of knowledge for its own sake has been a more certain good. There was a springtime in the eighteenth century when, through knowledge and reason, everything seemed possible; when reason was expected to break through religious dogma like the sun breaking through fog, and

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man, armed with knowledge and reason, would be able at last to control his own fate and construct a good society. The theory that because this world exists it is the best of all possible worlds spread outward from Leibniz; the word "optimism" was used for the first time in 1737.

What a burst of intellectual energies shook these decades! In twenty years, 1735–55, Linnaeus named and classified all of known botany, Buffon systematized natural history in thirty-six volumes, and an American, John Bartram, scoured the wilderness for plants to send to correspondents in Europe. Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Hume investigated the nature of man and the moral foundations of law and society. Benjamin Franklin demonstrated electricity from lightning. Dr. Johnson by himself compiled the first dictionary of the English language; Diderot and the Encyclopedists of France undertook to present the whole of knowledge in enlightened terms. The Chinese secret of making porcelain having been uncovered by Europeans, its manufacture flourished at Meissen and Dresden. Clearing for the Place de la Concorde, to be the most majestic in Europe, was begun in Paris. No less than 150 newspapers and journals circulated in England. The novel was exuberantly born in the work of Richardson and Fielding. Chardin, a supreme artist, portrayed humanity with a loving brush in his gentle domestic scenes. Hogarth, seeing another creature, exposed the underside in all its ribaldry and squalor. It was an age of enthusiasm; at the first London performance of Handel's *Messiah* in 1743, George II was so carried away by the "Hallelujah Chorus" that he rose to his feet, causing the whole audience to stand with him and thereby establishing a custom still sometimes followed by *Messiah* audiences. The man in whom the spirit of the age was to flower, Thomas Jefferson, was born.

If the twenty-year period is stretched by another ten, it includes the reverberating voice of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Beccaria's groundbreaking study, *Essay on Crimes and Punishment*, Gibbon's beginning of the *Decline and Fall*, and, despite the Lisbon earthquake and *Candide*, the admission of "optimism" into the dictionary of the Académie Française.

Although the Enlightenment may have overestimated the power of reason to guide human conduct, it nevertheless opened to men and women a more humane view of their fellow passengers. Slowly the harshest habits gave way to reform—in treatment of the insane, reduction of death penalties, mitigation of the fierce laws against debtors and poachers, and in the passionately fought cause for abolition of the slave trade.

The humanitarian movement was not charity, which always carries an overtone of being done in the donor's interest, but a more disinterested benevolence or altruism, motivated by conscience. It was per-

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sonified in William Wilberforce, who, in the later eighteenth century, stirred the great rebellion of the English conscience against the trade in human beings. In America the immorality of slavery had long troubled the colonies. By 1789 slavery had been legally abolished by the New England states followed by New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, but the southern states, as their price for joining the Union, insisted that the subject be excluded from the Constitution.

In England, where the home economy did not depend on slave labor, Wilberforce had more scope. His influence could have carried him to the prime minister's seat if personal power had been his goal, but he channeled his life instead toward a goal for mankind. He instigated, energized, inspired a movement whose members held meetings, organized petitions, collected information on the horrors of the middle passage, showered pamphlets on the public, gathered Nonconformist middle-class sentiment into a swelling tide that, in Trevelyan's phrase, "melted the hard prudence of statesmen." Abolition of the slave trade under the British flag was won in 1807. The British Navy was used to enforce the ban by searches on the high seas and regular patrols of the African coast. When Portugal and Spain were persuaded to join in the prohibition, they were paid a compensation of £300,000 and £400,000 respectively by the British taxpayer. Violations and smuggling continued, convincing the abolitionists that, in order to stop the trade, slavery itself had to be abolished. Agitation resumed. By degrees over the next quarter century, compensation reduced the opposition of the West Indian slave owners and their allies in England until emancipation of all slaves in the British Empire was enacted in 1833. The total cost to the British taxpayer was reckoned at £20 million.

Through recent unpleasant experiences we have learned to expect ambition, greed, or corruption to reveal itself behind every public act, but, as we have just seen, it is not invariably so. Human beings do possess better impulses, and occasionally act upon them, even in the twentieth century. Occupied Denmark, during World War II, outraged by Nazi orders for deportation of its Jewish fellow citizens, summoned the courage of defiance and transformed itself into a united underground railway to smuggle virtually all eight thousand Danish Jews out to Sweden, and Sweden gave them shelter. Far away and unconnected, a village in southern France, Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, devoted itself to rescuing Jews and other victims of the Nazis at the risk of the inhabitants' own lives and freedom. "Saving lives became a hobby of the people of Le Chambon," said one of them. The larger record of the time was admittedly collaboration, passive or active. We cannot reckon on the better impulses predominating in the world, only that they will always appear.

The strongest of these in history, summoner of the best in men, has

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been zeal for liberty. Time after time, in some spot somewhere on the globe, people have risen in what Swinburne called the "divine right of insurrection"—to overthrow despots, repel alien conquerors, achieve independence, and so it will be until the day power ceases to corrupt—which, I think, is not a near expectation.

The ancient Jews rose three times against alien rulers, beginning with the revolt of the Maccabees against the effort of Antiochus to outlaw observance of the Jewish faith. Mattathias the priest and his five sons, assembling loyal believers in the mountains, opened a guerrilla war which, after the father's death, was to find a leader of military genius in his son Judah, called Maccabee or the Hammer. Later honored in the Middle Ages as one of the Nine Worthies of the world, he defeated his enemies, rededicated the temple, and reestablished the independence of Judea. In the next century, the uprising of the Zealots against Roman rule was fanatically and hopelessly pursued through famines, sieges, the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple until a last stand of fewer than a thousand on the rock of Masada ended in group suicide in preference to surrender. After sixty years as an occupied province, Judea rose yet again under Simon Bar Kochba, who regained Jerusalem for a brief moment of Jewish control but could not withstand the arms of Hadrian. The rebellion was crushed, but the zeal for selfhood, smoldering in exile through eighteen centuries, was to revive and regain its home in our time.

The phenomenon continues in our own day, in Algeria, in Vietnam, although seen at close quarters and more often than not manipulated by outsiders, contemporary movements seem less pure and heroic than those polished by history's gloss—as, for instance, the Scots under William Wallace, the Swiss against the Hapsburgs, the American colonies against the mother country.

I have always cherished the spirited rejoinder of one of the great colonial landowners of New York who, on being advised not to risk his property by signing the Declaration of Independence, replied, "Damn the property; give me the pen!" On seeking confirmation for purposes of this essay, I am deeply chagrined to report that the saying appears to be apocryphal. Yet not its spirit, for the signers well knew they were risking their property, not to mention their heads, by putting their names to the Declaration.

Nor did they escape. Left vulnerable by Washington's defeat on Long Island, their estates were deliberately wrecked by the British, their homes ransacked and looted, books and papers burned, furniture smashed, livestock and stores destroyed, tenants and servants driven out, a thousand acres of Lewis Morris's timberland left in stumps. All were reduced to living by the charity of friends during the war. Philip Livingston died without ever seeing his home and lands again; the rich mer-

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chant William Floyd was permanently ruined. Other affluent men who signed had much to lose—Hancock of Massachusetts, who wrote his name large so that no one would mistake it, Lee of Virginia, Carroll of Baltimore. George Washington himself epitomized the spirit later in the war when he wrote to reproach his overseer at Mount Vernon for supplying provisions to a British landing party that had sailed up the Potomac and threatened to burn the estate unless their demands were met. It would have been "less painful," he wrote, to have learned that, as a result of refusal, "they had burnt my House and laid my plantation in ruins." Economic self-interest, as this illustrates, is not always our guiding instinct.

So far I have considered qualities of the group rather than of the individual—except for art, which in most cases is a product of the single spirit. Happiness, too, is an individual matter. It springs up here or there, haphazard, random, without origin or explanation. It resists study, laughs at sociology, flourishes, vanishes, reappears somewhere else. Take Izaak Walton, author of *The Compleat Angler*, that guide to contentment as well as fishing of which Charles Lamb said, "It would sweeten any man's temper at any time to read it." Though Walton lived in distracted times of revolution and regicide, though he adhered to the losing side in the English Civil War, though he lost in their infancy all seven children by his first wife and the eldest son of his second marriage, though he was twice a widower, his misfortunes could not sour an essentially buoyant nature. "He passed through turmoil," in the words of a biographer, "ever accompanied by content."

Walton's secret was friendship. Born to a yeoman family and apprenticed in youth as an ironmonger, he managed to gain an education and, through sweetness of disposition and a cheerful religious faith, became a friend on equal terms of various learned clergymen and poets whose lives he wrote and works he prefaced—among them John Donne, George Herbert, and Michael Drayton. Another companion, Charles Cotton, wrote of Izaak, "In him I have the happiness to know the worthiest man, and to enjoy the best and truest friend any man ever had."

The Compleat Angler, published when the author was sixty, glows in the sunshine of his character. In it are humor and piety, grave advice on the idiosyncrasies of fish and the niceties of landing them, delight in nature and in music. Walton saw five editions reprinted in his lifetime while innumerable later editions secured him immortality. The surviving son by his second wife became a clergyman; the surviving daughter married one and gave her father a home among grandchildren. He wrote his last work at eighty-five and died at ninety after being celebrated in verse by one of his circle as a "happy old man" whose life "showed how to compass true felicity." Let us think of him when we grumble.

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Is anything to be learned from my survey? I raise the question only because most people want history to teach them lessons, which I believe it can do, although I am less sure we can use them when needed. I gathered these examples not to teach but merely to remind people in a despondent era that the good in mankind operates even if the bad secures more attention. I am aware that selecting out the better moments does not result in a realistic picture. Turn them over and there is likely to be a darker side, as when Project Apollo, our journey to the moon, was authorized because its glamour could obtain subsidies for rocket and missile development that otherwise might not have been forthcoming. That is the way things are.

Whole philosophies have evolved over the question whether the human species is predominantly good or evil. I only know that it is mixed, that you cannot separate good from bad, that wisdom, courage, and benevolence exist alongside knavery, greed, and stupidity; heroism and fortitude alongside vainglory, cruelty, and corruption.

It is a paradox of our time in the West that never have so many people been so relatively well off and never has society been more troubled. Yet I suspect that humanity's virtues have not vanished, although the experiences of our century seem to suggest that they are in abeyance. A century that took shape in the disillusion which followed the enormous effort and hopes of World War I, that saw revolution in Russia congeal into the same tyranny it overthrew, saw a supposedly civilized nation revert under the Nazis into organized and unparalleled savagery, saw the craven appeasement by the democracies, is understandably marked by suspicion of human nature. A literary historian, Van Wyck Brooks, discussing the nineteen-twenties and -thirties, spoke of "an eschatological despair of the world." Whereas Whitman and Emerson, he wrote, "had been impressed by the worth and good sense of the people, writers of the new time" were struck by their lusts, cupidity, and violence, and had come to dislike their fellow men. The same theme reappeared in a recent play in which a mother struggled against her two "pitilessly contemptuous" children. Her problem was that she wanted them to be happy and they did not want to be. They preferred to watch horrors on television. In essence this is our epoch. It insists upon the flaws and corruptions, without belief in valor or virtue or the possibility of happiness. It keeps turning to look back on Sodom and Gomorrah; it has no view of the Delectable Mountains.

We must keep a balance, and I know of no better prescription than a phrase from Condorcet's eulogy on the death of Benjamin Franklin: "He pardoned the present for the sake of the future."

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The Truck

JOHN STONE

I was coming back from
wherever I'd been when
I saw the truck and
the sign on the back repeated
on the side to be certain
you knew it was no mistake

PROGRESS CASKETS
ARTHUR ILLINOIS

Now folks have different
thoughts it's true about
death but in general it's
not like any race for
example you ever ran
everyone wanting to come in

last and all And I admit
a business has to have a good
name No one knows better
than I the value of a good
name A name is what sells
the product in the first

and in the final place
All this time the Interstate
was leading me into Atlanta

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and I was following the sign
and the truck was heavier
climbing the hill than

going down which is as
it should be What I really
wanted to see was the driver
up close maybe talk to him
find out his usual run
so I could keep off it

Not that I'm superstitious It's just
the way I was raised A casket
may be Progress up in Arthur
but it's thought of
down here
as a setback.

JOHN STONE's second book of poems, *In All This Rain*, will be published this fall by Louisiana State University Press. He is a physician in Atlanta, where he teaches at Emory University School of Medicine.

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The Bent

DONALD DAVIE

Thinking how it is
  too late to undertake
    one more dutiful office
against my bent ("the grain,"
  I called it once), too late
    to make as much as can
be made of Zukofsky's "A"
  or his "Catullus," and
    recalling how I met him
once, reluctantly though
  rewardingly in the event,
    and how he is dead, I am left
with the conjecture poets
  have treated me with as much
    compassionate gentleness as
we might ascribe to centaurs
  finding within their troop
    either a man or a horse.

When I consider these
  whose operations are
    not beyond me but
as it were beside me
  in an alternative cosmos
    I do not envy them.

✪ DONALD DAVIE, professor of English at Vanderbilt University, is the author of *Articulate Energy: An Inquiry into the Syntax of English Poetry.* His *Collected Poems* was published in 1972.

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The Genius and the Injustice Collector

A Memoir of James Joyce

LEON EDEL

I SAW JAMES JOYCE FOR THE FIRST TIME at the Paris opera in 1929. I went to the opera because I knew he would be there and I wanted to have a good look at him. From my eighteenth year, when I had obtained a copy of the banned *Ulysses*, he had been my personal culture hero, as he was for an entire generation of literary people, many of whom traveled to Paris and walked away from Shakespeare & Company in the rue de l'Odéon clutching their precious copy of the censored book in its sea-blue covers—the blue, we were assured, of the Greek flag. Joyce from the first had a way of putting as many meanings into a color or a word as possible; his portmanteau of language was always tightly packed.

I have to put myself back into my twenty-two-year-old self, wearing my beret and wandering on the fringes of the so-called "lost generation." I certainly didn't feel lost. I wanted to set eyes on Joyce, and every time I went to Sylvia Beach's shop I looked around for the guiding genius of the place. I remember seeing a great many celebrities at Shakespeare & Company, but during my first year in Paris I never had a glimpse of James Joyce. Miss Beach sheltered him; he was mysterious, he was legendary, he was invisible. Exile, toil, persecution, poverty, cunning—he seemed himself the reincarnation of Odysseus. What writer would have had the audacity to put a single day—a Dublin day at that—into one book, to clutch at one moment in time out of eternity and a timeless world—and to do it with words alone? This was the excuse for my youthful idolatry.

My reason for going to the opera, aside from curiosity about Joyce himself, was to respond to a call he had issued through Miss Beach. Odysseus wanted all hands on deck to applaud an Irish tenor named John Sullivan who had been engaged by the Paris opera to sing *Guillaume Tell* and *Les Huguenots* but was being given few opportunities to do so.

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Joyce believed it was rank discrimination: the opera people were playing favorites, and poor Sullivan needed money and recognition for his virtuosity. "Sullivan sings 45 G's, 93 A flats, 92 A's, 54 B flats, 15 B's, 19 C's and 2 C sharps"—the statistical Joyce talked very much like his Leopold Bloom. He added, "Nobody else can do it." This idea of the unique performer, the unique performance sounded like Joyce himself. Who else would count every sharp and flat! He had identified himself wholly with his compatriot. He began to think of Sullivan as a "banned singer," like himself, the "banned writer." And he would write "From a Banned Writer to a Banned Singer" in the language of *Finnegans Wake*. But I had to recognize, when I informed myself, that *Les Huguenots* and *Guillaume Tell* were not the most popular revivals of the season. And doubtless the administration of the place de l'Opéra had to give other singers their turn; a singer named Lauri-Volpi, a lyrical tenor, seemed to be favored. Giacomo Lauri-Volpi appears in the "Banned Singer" as "luring volupy" and was characterized as fit only to intone love songs.

At any rate Joyce was organizing an informal claque, and I made myself a member of it. We paid for our own tickets. I remember I went to the box office the morning the seat sale opened, and waited a couple of hours in line to obtain a good cheap seat. My student's purse contained only a few francs, but we were not to clap for our supper. Such are the loyalties of hero worship. Instead of buying an eight- or ten-franc seat (about 35 cents) in the front row of the top balcony, as I invariably did, I invested a dollar in a second-tier front seat. I would command a view of the entire opera from the middle right side of the horseshoe. After all, I was to have not only the singing of Sullivan (who had to be good, if Joyce said so) but a glimpse of the Great Man himself. It was well worth the price of a couple of Latin Quarter meals.

I arrived early and watched from my advantageous position. The stalls were very well dressed, and the cheaper seats were soon filled. I scanned the operagoers for a sight of Joyce, but there was no sign of him in the great russet acoustical chamber, with its celebrated chandelier from which Lon Chaney had swung. What a busy place! An air of anticipation and excitement, and the usual lines struggling to get seated while the black-dressed *ouvreuses* pocketed their tips with that mixture of motherliness and avarice for which they are famous. The fiddles were tuning up. I swept my little opera glass across the seats on the theory that the leader of our claque was already in his place. I was sure I'd find him. And then suddenly, at the last minute, he was there; I saw him walking down the left aisle. A younger man directly behind him I judged to be Joyce's son Giorgio, who had also trained for the opera and was said to be a fine baritone. The first glimpse was a bit of a shock; Joyce walked like a blindman. He looked straight ahead of him, with the rigid-

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ity of sightlessness, and leaned on his cane—doubtless the ashplant of *A Portrait of an Artist*. He was immaculately dressed—black tie, boiled shirt, and the famous latinquarter hat perched on his head. The two moved slowly down the thronged aisle, ignored by the audience, and sat down in about the twelfth or fifteenth row of the stalls. Joyce took the aisle seat. He shifted himself slowly into it. After a bit he removed his funereal hat, revealing abundant graying hair combed back and glistening. He peered through what looked like two pairs of spectacles, one superimposed on the other. The world had heard of his cataract operations. He was not totally sightless, but that evening he seemed like blind Homer, author of literature's queerest odyssey.

Once settled, he was immobile; he kept his hand on his stick. Then the lights dimmed. The orchestra began the fustian overture. I can't recall much of the opera. It was, I believe, the only Meyerbeer I ever heard, and the music seemed to me florid and old-fashioned. They drank; they roared; they stabbed; they chorused; they died. I had been nourishing myself on Bach and Stravinsky and Debussy, and somehow this opera seemed wrong. I deplored Joyce's musical taste; I felt that the Huguenots would hardly have sung so lyrically of their miseries; I did not care for historical violence and tragedy set to music.

John Sullivan finally appeared. He was in elaborate costume and had a tenorial embonpoint. Joyce didn't let him get out a single note. He began to applaud as soon as Sullivan was sighted, and we obediently joined and stopped the show. Sullivan had his recognition then and there, as if it were the final curtain. He could have sung badly. He could have hit false notes instead of all those fine ones Joyce had catalogued. Our part of the audience was assured beforehand of his greatness. As a matter of fact, he did have a fine voice, but it had sung better days. I expected a voice as reverberant as Caruso's. Sullivan's was smaller and distinctly lyrical (Lauri-Volpi's was smaller still)—and distinctly Irish. He could go up very high; he sustained his notes beautifully. He was, however, a stiff, heavy, overcostumed figure on the stage, and Meyerbeer's opera was pretty stiff too. It was when Sullivan had finished his first aria that I heard Joyce—clear, bell-like, high. The banned writer sang out, right up to the chandelier, "Bravo! Bravo!" I can hear him still. The banned writer applauded the "banned" singer. *We* brought down the house.

At the end of the first act, I wandered out for a closer glimpse of the literary virtuoso. I suspected Joyce would not stray far from his seat, so I descended the marble staircase to the horseshoe corridor on Joyce's side. There he stood, smoking a cigarette near the entrance to his aisle, surrounded by a group of friends. I watched (very worshipfully) at a distance, and I had a clear and undisturbed vision of my culture hero. He seemed tall; he was slim and carelessly elegant. His body curved in a

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slouch, like a question mark. He had put his latinquarter hat back on his head; it was slightly pushed up on his forehead. His clothes were well tailored, he wore pumps, and there was a certain daintiness and jauntiness in him despite the slouch. I had seen photographs of Joyce with a little goatee, but he no longer wore this. His mustache was closely trimmed, and the single great feature of his face was its owllike, peering quality—those thick walls of glass seemed to shut everyone away from him. I could catch the tones of his melodious voice, but not the words. He talked; he never smiled. He appeared to me sad, weary, oppressed; he leaned on his ashplant with the jejune weariness of Stephen Dedalus, his body seeming hung loosely together. There was no suggestion in his manner that he was in any way enjoying this evening, in spite of its aggressive intentions and its clear triumph.

The rest of the evening was a repetition of all I have described: more Sullivanian high notes, more applause, more vocal variants on Joyce's "Bravo!" and "puur Jemmy in the stalls," as the virtuoso described himself with a hint of self-pity—Jemmy applauding "that long note he just delivered." We have Joyce's rendering of the evening in the "Banned Singer."

> Grand spectacular exposition of gorge cutting, mortarfiring and general martyrification, beleighted up with erst classed instrumental music. Pardie! There's more sang in that Sceine than mayer's beer at the Guildhall . . .

And so on: the characteristic puns, the Irish jabberwocky. Joyce alludes to his claque a few lines after this in describing the *cliqueclaquehats* worn by three other tenors, Enrico, Giacomo, and Giovanni (that is, the dead Caruso, the fading Lauri-Volpi, and the elderly Martinelli). Sullivan must have had more applause than he had ever reaped in all his life; and always there came that splendid lyrical "Bravo!" which seemed to soar high, high up to the great frescoed ceiling. At the end, Joyce stood at his seat waving and cheering as if he were leading conquering troops to a great victory.

Had I been more prosperous then, I suppose I might have attended all of Sullivan's appearances that winter—or shall I say all of Joyce's? I know he was always there in his stall, giving his bravo signal to his cohorts. But I confined myself to the one evening of *Les Huguenots* and to the first performance of *Guillaume Tell*. Joyce was in his usual seat at the latter and I was in mine, and we mingled our applause as before. "Guillaume's shot telled, sure enough," with all the prescribed high Cs, "for the odd and twentieth supererogatory time" (so we can read in the "Banned Singer"). "Aim well, Arnold," and Sullivan in the Arnold role hits his notes and "draws the breathblow: that arrownotes coming." Sullivan had his great evening, and between the acts Joyce smoked his ciga-

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rettes and talked gloomily (so it seemed) to his entourage. If the operas had bored me less, I suppose I might have been a more loyal claqueur, but I felt I had done my duty. I had lent my applause and spent my sous for Joyce's cause, and I suspect that when I applauded Sullivan at these gala occasions, I was, in the deepest part of me, applauding the other virtuoso, a hero not of the voice but of the pen. I would not be surprised that, in the deepest part of himself, Joyce's applause was as much for the banned writer as for the allegedly banned singer. For Joyce had linked himself wholly to his countryman's voice and read his own dilemma into the life of Sullivan—"this hardworking guy—long to lung over us." Having crowned him king of the tenors, Joyce, super performer of the writers, was satisfied.

12, rue de l'Odéon

My few memories, which are a series of vivid pictures but which may seem like a trip through a photo album when told in words, would be but half told if I did not say a little about the two ladies of the rue de l'Odéon. To this day I think of this short street somehow as a feminized street—not, as some Paris streets are, by *haute couture* but by its two noble tenants, both of whom have been recalled in various pages, not least in their own memoirs. The rue de l'Odéon: I look up from the Boulevard St. Germain and see at its far end the pseudo Greek of the Odéon theater, today Malraux-cleaned and chaste like some ancient temple shining as if just built. I knew it in its down-at-heels days before and during the Second World War, and in the 1920s and early 1930s I browsed under its arcades in Flammarion's bookstalls. I remember the old Restaurant Voltaire at the left of the semicircle and, higher up, the Hotel Corneille, which in its time had harbored so many writers including Joyce himself. If you walked up the left side of rue de l'Odéon in the direction of the theater you would arrive very quickly at a French bookshop with the words LA MAISON DES AMIS DES LIVRES painted in large letters above the windows, and if you looked a short diagonal across the street you saw SHAKESPEARE & COMPANY in the same lettering. They were, if you examined one and then the other, twin bookshops, and if you entered them you recognized affinities and resemblances. Both were lending libraries; both were frequented by latinquarter students, French and non-French; both were presided over by interesting ladies who made friends with their customers. Much later in life I saw a picture of André Gide wearing a beret, and realized I had often browsed beside him at Adrienne Monnier's. I seem to see Valéry there too, although I am not certain; one sometimes tends to falsify memory with photographs of the same places seen later. Adrienne Monnier's French lending library was a

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busy little shop and I remember my first glimpse of her late in 1928; she has been much described, and we have Gisèle Freund's beautiful photographs of her. I see her now in her shop, or in Sylvia Beach's, or crossing the street in her long, nunlike flowing blue or gray garb—the round, soft, white-powdered face, the hair pulled back, her open-wide eyes. She reminded me of Flemish portraits, of rounded, large-eyed, reality-seeking ladies; all that she needed was the old-time ruff. Indeed, reading one of her little essays I find she compared herself with such a portrait, from which I conclude that she probably dressed for the part. Her shop was always attractive, and yet it is hard to say why. There was no elaborate display: a few paintings and photos in such little spaces as were not taken by books, a stove, a straw chair; the books were covered with cheap tissue to protect them, since most of them circulated. I remember that when my first book was published I solemnly brought it to Adrienne and inscribed a copy for her. She insisted on reciprocating the gift and gave me the French translation of *Ulysses*, which she had published. I felt I had far and away the best of that bargain.

The story of Adrienne's shop was an interesting one. She had gone to England when young and learned to speak English (although I remember her speaking only French in her singsong voice). Her father had been injured in a train accident, for which he had received a large indemnity. He turned over some of this money to Adrienne and she, booklover and constant reader, had the idea of opening a little bookshop at 7 rue de l'Odéon. She was twenty-two then (in 1915), which means that she was in her late thirties when I first met her. She was to remain in this one shop for thirty-six years. It survived the Second World War, closing its doors in 1951 because Adrienne's health was poor. (She committed suicide four years later in blank depression. Who today can say why?)

I got to know Sylvia Beach over the years, and I remember her (as a whole generation of Americans must) in her well-cut suits and her bobbed black hair (Adrienne in the end bobbed hers too). She had a soft, musical voice and was one of the pleasantest women I have ever known. Much has been said about her difficulties with Joyce, and anyone who knows anything about him and his money problems will recognize how much of a trial he must have been at times to his publisher. But I can testify that in all the years I knew her (I saw her often between 1928 and 1932 and again during 1936–37 as well as after the Occupation, when her shop was closed) I never heard her speak of him unkindly. She always spoke his name with respect; in fact, I never heard her say anything that did not enlarge the legend she had helped to create. She was, in the 1920s and 1930s, a kind of spokesman for Joyce; she was, so to speak, his public relations agent as much as his publisher. In the late 1920s he came much less frequently to Sylvia Beach's shop than in earlier days. Her cus-

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tomers always hoped to see him and asked questions about him, especially the summer visitors who arrived to buy their copies of *Ulysses*, and she was always patient, discreet, tactful. She could have set herself up as a flourishing avant-garde publisher. Many writers sent their manuscripts to her. But she remained the publisher of *Ulysses* and *Pomes Penyeach* and the little volume of comments on *Finnegans Wake* when it was still *Work in Progress*. She remained in effect the publisher of a single author and in reality of a single work. She had never intended to be a publisher; she was one by circumstance. She had wanted to have her modest little bookshop, her literary foyer modeled on Adrienne's, but fame, in the figure of the tall, slouching Irishman with his cane and his arrogance, thrust itself through her doorway.

It was Sylvia who in the winter of 1931 sent me an invitation to attend a soirée at Adrienne Monnier's that would be devoted to a reading of the French translation of *Anna Livia Plurabelle*. The passage had been rendered out of Joyce's liquid river-sounds into a strange, exotic Gallic equivalent. Joyce had presided over the translating sessions; it was translation by committee. One man wrote the text, but several translators were required—the combined efforts of Jolas, Beckett, Philippe Soupault, Ivan Goll, Paul Léon.

I arrive early. It is a damp Paris night. The shop is festive. The tables have been pushed aside; half a hundred chairs have been crowded into the front, where the window is the backdrop. I make for two low, curved seats in front and take one to the side, so I can see and hear everything and still be out of the way. I am distinctly conscious of myself as a student strayed into a literary party. I recognize a number of faces, the originals of photographs on Adrienne's and Sylvia's walls. But I know no one save my bustling hostesses. I sit quietly in my little corner. Adrienne takes her place in front of a music stand on which she has arranged the sheets of the French translation. Philippe Soupault is to speak. A tall figure glides swiftly in and places himself in the second low chair with the round arms just opposite, the twin of the one I am occupying. James Joyce is a few inches from me; I am looking into the sad face with the clipped mustache. Joyce's long legs almost touch mine. He looks larger than life, with his great owl-glass eyes, the most vivid thing I remember about him. Memorable evening. I sit as close to my culture hero as I ever got. Should I address him? What should I say? I am frozen. I am tongue-tied. I say nothing. I pull further into myself before the inscrutable and melancholy Irishman. When I recall the evening I remember above all the air of distance and aloofness of Joyce, the impassive countenance almost without expression. I am profoundly aware of the deep gloom in the man. He is shut in; he seems shut away. What could I say to him that

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wouldn't sound fatuous? The eyes are magnified and blurred. He is well dressed, informal; he slouches in his seat and leans his head on his hand much of the time. Philippe Soupault speaks with charm and liveliness of the translating sessions. He offers generalizations about *Work in Progress* and, if I remember rightly, speaks of the plastic qualities of English and the resistance of French to these very qualities. Then Adrienne reads the French text, in the accents of the Comédie Française, singsong, in her high musical voice, up and down, up and down, no low tones. She is wearing her long robes and has a white shawl thrown over her shoulders. She chants Joyce in French—strange, weird. I can hear her, and the audience listens silently and respectfully. Her lips become a circle as she says the word *ondes*. Joyce sits without moving. I keep glancing at him, not knowing whether he is aware of me save as a juxtaposed physical presence.

Then Adrienne brings out a portable gramophone and winds it up. She plays the original passage as Joyce recorded it. It is one of the finest of all the recordings of what we now call "the spoken word." Joyce's genius for mimicry and his histrionic talent is in it. He is all the actor and also all the singer, and it is here that I can discover the sentient Joyce and his sentimental tenderness for words. *Are you not gone ahome? What Thom Malone? Can't hear with the bawk of bats.* Sylvia Beach had played the recording for me just after she received it and she had obtained another copy for me. I remember how we had followed the text in the specially printed copy from which Joyce read it. It was set in large type so that he could read it with ease, and the effect was of large sheets of a medieval manuscript. The oversize letters hadn't prevented him from reversing some of the phrases, or skipping a word here and there. Now he sits, looking innocent and disinterested, as if listening to a stranger's voice, a poker face in the hush of Adrienne's shop. Oh, yes, I thought, the artist "refined out of existence, indifferent, and paring his fingernails." Was I reading something into the moment? This moment when I watched Joyce—I stared with impunity, he seemed so far away—and he sat there, head high, slightly cocked, jaunty, listening attentively but with no sign of being affected. I thought of it then, and think of it still, as a split second of literary history; and I am grateful that I had been vouchsafed a glimpse, a unique glimpse, of the author of *Finnegans Wake* listening to himself, to the strange and esoteric music of the word he had brought into being. I understood more than ever why this performing artist compulsively led his claque at the opera.

Work in Progress had seemed to me from the first the writing of a madman. It was, I thought, the futile creation of an energetic and endless jeu d'esprit. I had wondered again and again why Joyce was "wasting" his unique gifts in fashioning an entire book out of portmanteau

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words, the kind Lewis Carroll put together in jabberwocky. As successive sections appeared in the magazine *transition*, my bewilderment had grown, and while some of the word-nonsense was amusing and the puns in several languages were sufficiently outrageous, I had shrugged my shoulders, as the young will, and wanted to prescribe to the great man the books he should be writing. But from the moment I heard Joyce's recording of this section of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* I became a convert. I felt that there was method in the madness. It was during this time that Adrienne gave me an old 1925 issue of her avant-garde magazine *Le Navire d'argent*, which contained the earliest published version of *Anna Livia*. What startled me were sentences of "normal" English prose, and I suddenly had the idea of comparing this text with later texts to discover how Joyce was fashioning his work. I knew of at least four subsequent versions, and I collected these with all the zeal of a textual scholar.

The result was an article which I published in a Canadian monthly. I came on a copy of it recently; it is full of borrowed language, and I would never reprint it, but I suppose I can claim to have been among the first in the long line of academic *Finnegan* explicators, a kind of frontiersman of what has since come to be known as the "Joyce industry" in the universities. I am glad I wrote the article, for in it I recognized that *Work in Progress* needed to be defended against those who were pouring ridicule on it. Or, as I put it—as solemnly as Dedalus, with a certain pomposity, as if I were writing a leader for the *Times*—"what concerns us at the moment is method in *Work in Progress*: there is sufficient in it, I feel, to warrant a close scrutiny rather than a careless dismissal." The close scrutiny continues everywhere as I write these words. I find that I took a page out of Irving Babbitt to suggest that perhaps there was "a *mélange* of too many things, a confusion of the arts, akin to Father Castel's *clavecin des couleurs*." As I have said, my collation of the text had been stimulated by the fact that in the *Navire d'argent* version Joyce had written some sentences in straight English, such as "Wait till the rising of the moon." But in subsequent versions (and in the pages of *Finnegans Wake*) this became "Wait till the honeying of the lune, love." The change from "moon" to "lune" and the metaphor of "honeying"—thus "honeymoon"—opened avenues of liquidity, and of pun and suggestion. My article merely made a small point; it was left to Harry Levin to write the first major expository essay, and when *Finnegans Wake* was published, Edmund Wilson was to read it with an ease that to this day few can cultivate. Thornton Wilder was to be fascinated by it for years, finding all kinds of hidden meanings until one day he felt he was being "had"—possessed by the Joyce demon. Ultimately his verdict was "Quelle fumisterie!"

When my little article appeared, I showed it to Sylvia Beach and she

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showed it to Joyce. She told me he read it with pleasure. Later she gave me a photograph of him, which he had inscribed to me—his and Sylvia's way of thanking me. Joyce at that time was grateful for any commentary (however youthful) on his work that did not ridicule it. We know how the book itself finally came out at the moment of the Second World War, and how the light and liquid sounds of the Liffey were drowned in the roar of Hitler's guns. Today *Finnegans Wake* is in paperback, and a hardy new generation, trained in textual study, takes it in a vigorous stride. It is a work of the linguistic imagination and of fairy-tale quality. But as exegesis of it continues, something else will be revealed. I have looked at the book often enough to become aware that in it can be found both the most and the least benign sides of Joyce. Joyce the monster, the furtive and cunning, has used this poetic work to pay off all his old grudges and debts as he did in certain pages of *Ulysses*. As those to whom he was devoted figure affectionately in the book, so he has also, like Dante, placed his enemies—or those he believed to be his enemies—somewhere in the polyglot purgatories of his word world. *Finnegans Wake* is both a work of art and an act of revenge. It combines the brilliancy and the madness of art. And I think in the end we will marvel that a man should have so transformed the pettiness of the harbored grudge into the humor and beauty of speech. *Finnegans Wake* remains the greatest curiosity of modern literature. Generations unborn will learn lessons from it. But the book will also be an object lesson in the perversities of genius, the compulsions of art. There is simply too much of it.

Journey to Zurich

In 1946, at Christmas, I did what now seems to me a curious thing. I went to Zurich and visited the grave of James Joyce. It was curious because I was then stationed with the U.S. Military Government in Germany, a time when I was not inclined to make sentimental pilgrimages. The war had just ended. I was seeking ways to help Germans untainted by Nazism—there were a certain number—reestablish a reasonably objective press, for better or for worse, in the U.S. zone. The Goebbels propaganda machine had perished in the holocaust of the Chancellery in Berlin. Goebbels had committed suicide in that great illusion of *Götterdämmerung* in which the Hitlerians lived. They died in an ordinary fire, believing themselves in Valhalla. The propaganda machine was literally wrecked; its communications were chewed up. It was very difficult to find reporters in Germany who had not served the war makers. All that is another story, and I find the years have tended to erase much of it. It was a time of nightmare, after the speed and movement and triumph of the Battle of France, and we tend to forget nightmares. Perhaps one

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way to escape was to go to Zurich when I got my first leave.

In Germany I lived in a hotel in the town of Bad Nauheim, where Americans used to take the baths for various ailments, notably heart disease. We had made it our headquarters and set up offices for the little news agency I had organized for Military Government's "Information Control Division." In the midst of this, as if I were reaching out to the sanity of another time, I found my thoughts turning to James Joyce. This was not altogether an accident. In the long evenings, in the bar at the Hotel Bristol, where we were billeted, time hung heavy on our hands; we drank watered German wine, and American officers talked of new wars to be fought. Here I found myself revisiting the past with an old acquaintance, Eugene Jolas, whom I had known in New York. He had been editor of *transition* (with a small t), the avant-garde journal of the expatriates in Paris, and had been a friend of James Joyce. The dead writer's name came up often in our talk, although we talked more often of war than of literature.

Eugene Jolas was a quiet and thoughtful man, born in New Jersey of French descent. His parents had taken him back to Lorraine as a boy and he had gone to the German schools, so he ended up a trilingual. This made him sensitive to word resemblances in different languages—to the question not only of how man communicates, but how he expresses himself. He knew the dada movement and was among the early exponents of surrealism in poetry. He wrote brooding poems of his own and opened his journal *transition* to many kinds of contributors. I can still taste the German wines we drank in the lounge in which the military sat discussing how America should take on Russia. There was a good deal of Army talk and barrack-room swagger around us, but Jolas and I talked of the life of letters. He had come to Germany as an American civilian to take part in the work of the Occupation and had agreed to be editor in chief of our news agency. Often in our talk we wandered back to the author of *Finnegans Wake.*

Late in the autumn of 1946, planning a furlough in which I would escape for a while from the claustrophobic life of the German military compound, I talked to Jolas of my proposed itinerary in Switzerland. He urged me to include Zurich and to call on Joyce's widow. I could ascertain for him whether she was in need of financial help. Royalties had not always reached her during the war years. Zurich, for me, was associated with Jung, and even more with Joyce, for I remembered the "Trieste-Zurich-Paris" at the end of *Ulysses.* I thought of the way in which the Irish writer had suddenly been swallowed up in 1941, at the moment when all Europe was in flames. We knew then very little of his end. It had come during the deepest nighttime of the war, when all we cherished seemed laid on sacrificial altars.

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Mention of Zurich had set Eugene Jolas roaming its streets in memory with Joyce, taking boat rides on the lake and walks on the Zurichberg near the zoo. Joyce was then writing the section of *Finnegans Wake* known as "The Mime of Mick, Nick and the Maggies," constantly elaborating and embroidering the text. One evening, as they walked near the zoo, he enchanted Jolas by quoting to him the nocturne of Phoenix Park from the "Mime"—its melting together of puns and poetry, seeking to create the animal sounds as they receded in the gathering night, a parallel passage to the nightfall passage in *Anna Livia Plurabelle*. . . . "It darkles . . . all this our funnanimal world. . . . Ark!? Noh? Nought stirs in spinney. The swayful pathways of the dragonfly spider stay still in reedery. Quiet takes back her folded fields. Tranquille thanks. Adew."

"You must dine at the Kronenhalle and order a *vin du Valais*," Jolas said, and he went on to praise the wine. The Kronenhalle restaurant had replaced in later years the Cafe Zum Pfauen of Joyce's earlier Zurich, chronicled by Frank Budgen. The Irish writer would dine, usually with Jolas, during this particular summer of 1932. Jolas remembered the desultory talk that continued for hours over the accumulating bottles of the Valais. "And be sure to take a walk by the Limmat," Jolas added. "Joyce always used to pun as he walked by it: 'See that! Isn't it the Limit?' "

So I found myself, during a frigid January in 1946, embarked on the classical literary pilgrimage—the visit to a hero's grave, a hero of letters, as one visits the graves of Keats and Shelley in Rome or the mountain grave of R. L. Stevenson in Samoa, or that of Rupert Brooke on his Skyros, or (as I would later visit with Edmund Wilson) the grave of Henry James in the Cambridge cemetery. I went by bus on a Sunday morning when a thick, buttery, bourgeois fog enfolded the stately city. I boarded the No. 5, which I was told would take me to the cemetery. It circled higher and higher in sepulchral mists, as in some modern eerie movie, some Poe-esque dream, until I was lifted out of swirling whiteness toward the clear air and blue sky. Below was the fogged-in city, and when we reached the Alte Kirche Fluntern the sun, pale and moist yellow, peered out of the tenuous mists.

The cemetery was situated a few yards from the terminal on a gentle slope. It was not a collection of miscellaneous tombstones, stuck densely together, as in many cities, but an orderly park, with tall trees, wide paths, and disciplined hedges. It had large gates and the snow had been carefully shoveled from the paths. To the right of the entrance was a long, low building which looked more like a dignified residence than a cemetery chapel. It had a portico and white pillars. There was snow on the lawn and on the roof. In the chapel office a stout woman proffered a card index. I found the name Joyce, James Augustine (the Aloysius was omitted), Grave No. 1449. "Go up the center aisle," the woman directed,

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"and turn left in the fourteenth row." I went crunching in the frozen snow, past silent stones, past a row of graves dug a month before, while the earth could still be turned. They were boarded over now, awaiting the dead. Death seemed orderly and normal here, after Germany.

There were bits of ice and snow on the simple, dark stone. I had to rub them off to read the name and the dates, 1882–1941. There was no inscription. At this moment I found myself repeating the final words of Joyce's story "The Dead," with his picture of the snow falling gently, gently falling, on every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. And here in Switzerland, far from the Shannon and the Liffey, under mountain snows, lay the once elegant triste figure I had seen at the opera or at Adrienne's, buried with all his mysteries of creation and damnation, his aggressions, his madness. I had mixed thoughts and they were only partly elegiac. I remember that what struck me most, as I thought of Joyce's world legend, was how little space it took to contain him—given the vast spaces of genius through which he had moved.

The church bells of Zurich began to ring their Sunday appeals to worshippers, in a symphony of metallic sound with varying rhythms, some distantly down in the city, some close, just beyond the tombstones. And then there crept a strange dissonance into this music. A loudspeaker began to blare a Strauss waltz (*Tales from the Vienna Woods*), and the noisily grating amplifier competed with the religious tonalities of the church bells, their deep clanging messages to the faithful that had sounded for decades and centuries. I remembered Jolas's words about the zoo; the zoo music and the church music blended as Joyce blended languages. The bells tolled, the loudspeaker music became shrill, and the sun acquired sufficient strength to start melting the bits of ice, so that tiny streams of water trickled down the dark headstone.

Later, when I heard the voice of Nora Joyce on the phone, I knew what Frank Budgen meant when he said Ireland herself was ever present at Joyce's side. She was deep voiced but soft spoken; the accent of Eire upon her lips delighted me. I felt her warmth even before I set eyes on her. She would not allow me to call on her; she insisted she would come to the Hotel Eden with her son to visit with me. I took this to mean that she lived in quarters poor or squalid and was ashamed to have me see them. She had her Irish pride. She was white haired, her face lined and sad—a woman very Irish, of natural charm and dignity and of great simplicity. I was struck by her large, strong, bony hands, the hands of a woman of the people. Crippled by arthritis, she had clearly made a heroic attempt to pay this visit, instead of my going to see her. To me this was evidence of her strained finances. Wartime restrictions were still in effect, royalties and other monies were tied up, and I did learn that she

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lived on very little. Her son Giorgio Joyce—in bearing and appearance, down to the long coat, the mustache, the glasses, and the way his thick hair was combed back—looked like photographs of his father in his Trieste and early Zurich days. We sat in the deserted and chilly sun room of the hotel and I heard the simple and sad chronicle of the last days of James Joyce. The name of Jolas had brought the son and the widow to see me; the message from him had been a spark of life in a dead past.

I have just reread what I wrote of this visit after I returned to New York. It was published as a small chapbook by Frances Steloff at the Gotham Book Mart. Between the lines of the past I recover much that I did not say—as if my emergence from the Army had created a frozen memory that only now has been thawed out. I can recover the Swiss light, the mountain vistas, the burgherliness of Zurich, and I wonder why I failed to describe Nora's shabby black dress and her arthritic rigidity. I mentioned none of this, nor the effect of frailty and forlornness, the anguish of memory that she communicated. I had simply remembered her gnarled hands. What I can see today, if I close my eyes, is the hotel lobby, the room, the big chairs. Mrs. Joyce asked for a hard-backed chair. We looked at one another, as in a council.

I still have the feeling of the snow-reflected light coming in through large windows; and I recover with ease, this above all, the constant surprise with which Nora Joyce greeted my appreciation of her dead husband: surprise that a stranger, in uniform, should want to hear about "Jim" and talk about him as if he were some great hero of legend—he who had been so mortal, so simply a husband (admittedly a difficult one). When I spoke of Joyce's growing fame, his posthumous life, then really just beginning, I talked of matters beyond her imagination—perhaps because she had not yet received the tangible proof of the royalities accumulated during the war years. She had known the improvident, demanding, mocking, depressed, moody, playful figure who, as she used to say, had such "a durrty mind." Our conversation followed the ground of the safe and the familiar; this was hardly the place for literature and literary criticism. We talked of rationings, of bombs sometimes falling inside neutral Switzerland, of other difficulties created by war, of Switzerland's isolation from the world. Mingled with these there would be a sudden memory of a picnic with the Jolases, or some glimpse of the old happy times in Paris. Infirm, stiff, dressed in her mourning black, with a seamed face lined by suffering and pain, Nora Joyce spoke of earthly human things in soft Irish accents. She refused the tea and biscuits I offered her, the meager resources of the hotel. Our interview was not prolonged. We exhausted our subject matter rather quickly. I could not ask the many questions that were on my lips; it would have taken hours of talk of a more intimate kind. Nor could I ask whether she was in want; something

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in her pride of carriage made it impossible to ask this even in the most covert way. She had told of the fall of Paris, the flight to Vichy, the long wait for permission to cross into neutral ground. Nor did it seem right to me to ask in particular what had become of Joyce's books and papers, though at a given moment she spoke of everything left behind, and mentioned Paul Léon, dead in a Nazi concentration camp, through whose resources many of Joyce's ephemeral belongings were rescued. There was still much nightmare around us. And yet so much had been obliterated. I made no mention of the grave, not many miles from where we sat. We talked of living things—and of the difficulty of living.

It was different, I remember, that evening when I went to call on Carola Giedion-Welcker, wife of the celebrated architect; she and her husband had been friends of Joyce from the time of the First World War. There, in a finely designed and spacious house, was this woman of perception and intelligence who had written about the modern movement and had known the men of dada and surrealism, as her collection of paintings and objets d'art told me. She talked of the arrival of the Joyces in Zurich, at the beginning of the war, and the brief months of the writer's residence there before his death. M. Giedion was away, I think lecturing at Harvard; but she had invited one or two of Joyce's friends to join us. I recall in particular her description of how the Joyces looked as they descended from the train in Zurich—on December 13, 1940—after their journey from the French frontier. They had been pale and thin, in a state of weariness and melancholy and starvation. Their clothes had become too large for them and hung loosely from their frames "like an angular group in a Picasso drawing."

Madame Giedion was hospitable. She offered tea and cookies and grappa. Europe lived that winter in unheated houses, as if the war were still on. We sat in an icy room, with its modernistic furniture and its prevalent surrealism, talking of things of the spirit and trying to keep warm with the liquids that warmed our throats but not our fingers and toes. I talked with a doctor, a rotund gentleman who had been Joyce's physician during his last illness, and he described the perforated ulcer, the transfusions, the peritonitis (which drugs, soon to be available, might have healed). Doctors have a way of reeling off clinical history that is both fascinating and chilling. Then at one point, our hostess played Joyce's recording of the section from *Anna Livia Plurabelle* in *Finnegans Wake*. Suddenly his voice was in our midst—strangers who had met, as it were, at his ghostly beckoning. "Tell me, tell me, tell me elm." Was his alienated ghost listening somewhere in that cold room filled with warm voices, not least his own? I remembered how I had sat beside him when the record was played in Paris—Joyce listening to Joyce.

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These were the fragments I gathered up later for "the last journey," having the help of a small book Mme Giedion had assembled of the last documents, the funeral accounts, a picture of the death mask in which Joyce's closed lips seemed fixed in a mocking grin. I had written with the aid of this book what was then a sketchy last chapter of the as-yet-unwritten life of the author of *Ulysses*! The author of *Ulysses* . . . Yes, in our time, Joyce had, in a curious way, succeeded in preempting Homer. I suppose if I were to ask a roomful of the young today who had written *Ulysses*, their answer would be James Joyce.

Afterthoughts

Writing now of Joyce, I find myself remembering Eugene Jolas's long silences in the bar at the Hotel Bristol. The period of the Occupation had no sense of triumph for me. There were too many graves, and the smell of the crematoria seemed to pervade every street, if not in reality certainly in our imaginations. There was rubble on all sides; we stood always in the shadow of ruin—when there was enough of a building left to cast a shadow. We drank, we talked, we played cards, we rode, we walked, we whiled away long evenings. Jolas, as the editor of *transition*, had been in the very heart of the literary movements of the nineteen-twenties in Paris at a time when I had hung on the periphery. Sometimes when I used to mention Joyce, Jolas would listen in silence. He half-closed his eyes; he nodded his fine, large gray head—he looked always like some grizzled Roman senator of the time of Augustus who had anachronistically donned an American Army uniform. He listened to my immoderate and worshipful praises, and I came to recognize that Jolas said nothing because his memories were less enchanted than mine, that for a long time he did not want to flash any light of truth over my images and myths. One evening, however, he said a few words I have never forgotten. He was sipping his Rhine wine and smoking a cigarette in silence, his heavy body relaxed. In the outer room the tank corps major—for whom the war was over and who enjoyed playing at being hotel keeper—was conducting the little orchestra he had assembled, pretending to be a bandleader. Jolas told me once more Joyce's alcoholic routine: his abstention during the daylight hours, his drinking of wine through the evening, bottle after bottle ("Ireland sober is Ireland stiff!") until he was anesthetized. His cigarettes would burn low in his fingers and blister them, but he would feel nothing. Jolas would take him home in a taxi, help him to bed, and find between his fingers the charred bits of paper and ash. "Great God, Edel," said Jolas, "great God! A man can't be a hero when you've seen him cold stiff, night after night." He said this suddenly with impatience, irritation, passion. And I think he wanted to

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convey to me, out of his own deep respect for his friend's work and his old-time attachment to him, that I should try to see Joyce as large as life and as large as his gifts made him—but not make him larger. If we pierce any artist's legend we discover an all-too-troubled human. A reader always has the artist pure, undiminished by reality, but I suppose he does not necessarily have him true. Biography tells the truth, but it also dispels the mystery; it rubs off the magic. Life ceaselessly refuses to remain virginal; it offers us instead the joy of discovery and above all immunity from self-deception. Yet it is hard to forget a fairy tale. Legend lingers.

And so with time I have learned to see that the Joyce of my early admiration was a hero of a fairy tale written by myself and by himself. In middle age I found myself looking upon a different man, the man Jolas wanted me to see. The Irish writer was a strange, lost, troubled individual, weighed down by double guilt, split by conflicts. He had turned upon his two mothers, the mother who had given him birth and the church in which he was baptized. He turned as well upon his motherland. He had in him all the guilt of his aggression, all the aggression of his guilt. He could do almost anything with words; he could do nothing with his damaged self. The artist was divorced from the world, but not from the word. And so he built his own world of words. He was a poet who had the recording eye of a photographer, and he had an electronic ear. The rarer music of string quartets and of instrumental works seems to have said less to him than the music of the voice, the lilt of Irish melodies, the sentiment of ballads. He was the first and ultimate artist who both used and mocked the media. The music of word and song was contained in a being singularly distrustful of the world and of people. Joyce was cut off from human warmth, even of those close to him; they too knew what strange barriers of the spirit he erected. He had to organize his existence—instinctively, intuitively—with primitive superstition and magic so as to defend himself from the strange fears and omens he believed were constantly threatening him.

Much of this is implicit, but not explicit, in Richard Ellmann's life of Joyce. It was as if in childhood some strange experiences had occurred that left him both artist and monster. Joyce had taken form as a person in Clongowes, where he was a small, slight, nearsighted boy, handicapped among his schoolfellows. He was never with his peers; he was always the younger boy. The sense of his inferiority which made him assert himself with arrogance is described in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* and also the growth of his defenses against physical weakness and nearsightedness. His sins bred guilt; inner violence became verbal violence. The two halves—the dissociated, alienated Joyce and the active Joyce—were kept from disintegration by the rituals Joyce organized for himself

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and by a kind of indomitable love of verbal beauty, in which he found the strength to save himself because it could express the ugliness within and be purgative. He was driven by nightmares. He felt that all his friends would betray him; he demanded complete loyalty yet never trusted those he could trust. I know of no other artist in the whole history of art who was so certain of his greatness before achieving it. Usually an artist wins acceptance—and greatness—by what he offers to the world. The Joyce who left Ireland feeling he had been rejected had offered nothing but an intense rage, a gift of withering utterance: a precocious article on Ibsen, a few derivative poems with music in them, the "pure poetry" that George Moore defined. Suffering from an unflagging grandiosity and with the genius of his language, Joyce made the world yield to his demands. The world had owed a handout to his barfly father, who earned it by anecdotal charm and barroom blarney. Joyce surpassed his father a thousand times in the same maneuver. He is the supreme example of the artist in our century—before the bounty of the foundations—who was supported ultimately by a rich (at first anonymous) patroness in England, Harriet Shaw Weaver.

Joyce the cadger, determined like Thoreau to live in his own way and make the world support him, convinced of his gift and his message and his vocation—Joyce-against-the-world wove a myth of the world-against-Joyce. He is portrayed for us faithfully by himself in the three volumes of letters we now have. We possess him in all his misery and heartbreak. I looked forward to these stout volumes, as one who cherishes the least scribble of a writer of genius, and Joyce's corpus consisted of so few books. His letters represent a large addition to the quantity of his prose. The impression I received from the first volume of the letters (followed ten years later by two more volumes) was of a man singularly unaware of the art of friendship or of the use of letters in human intercourse. He had loyal, devoted friends, but he was in reality a vampire; friends existed to be used. His correspondence has none of the easy give-and-take of the great epistolary artists—no generalizations about literature, no discussion of the work of his contemporaries to any significant extent, no hint of a literary idea or theory, only occasional flashes of the word-audacities of *Ulysses* and *Finnegan.* He is very concrete, very demanding, utterly egocentric. By comparison with the letters of Flaubert, whose career and work in some ways resembled Joyce's on the side of craft, these are the hasty scribbles of a petty clerk, a rude egotist, rather than of a committed artist. They are the marginal fragments of Joyce's life, and not of his creative life. They say the things he had to scribble down for the minimal communication forced upon him by the daily demands of the world. But he would much rather not have communicated at all. What one hears in the two later volumes (published long after the

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first volume appeared) is a perpetual cry for money, for help, for love. The world is repeatedly proclaimed cheat and liar, and Joyce is its crucified martyr. The letters are a mixture of self-advertisement, charlatanism, pedantry, and arrogance. In this way Joyce fought his private demons.

The weight and abundance of these terrible writings of a desperate man risk a weariness to the spirit and to the reader's sympathy. Too much is told—more, perhaps, than is needed even for the purpose of truth and history. The anguish is made redundant. Stephen Spender remarked that if one does not keep in mind Joyce's sense of comedy, "he may find Joyce's letters oppressive and, in the long run, almost unbearable." When one comes to the essence of the matter, laughter is impossible. For the letters demonstrate more clearly than ever the pathological elements in the art of James Joyce. The writer was so alienated from the world, so cut off from empathy, that he could be ruthless with family, cruel to friends, surprisingly childish in his recurrent demands that the world give him ad hoc recognition. His talent, when he finally showed it, was accepted. Yet Joyce continued to cry betrayal, for in his alienation everything was pulled inward, into himself and his "madness of art." It is always Joyce on Joyce; and it is Joyce consuming himself in an eternal rage of art. For the Irish rebel, writing was a form of revenge against a host of imaginary foes—and he paid them off with "dagger definitions."

The essential story of Joyce's life has been given to us as that of an oppressed artist. He quit Ireland in poverty and anger, although many (including Yeats and Lady Gregory) held out hands of friendship to him. He wandered, pathetic and unheroic, until he settled in backwater polyglot Trieste and taught at Berlitz. He exploited his talented brother Stanislaus, one of the martyred siblings of literary history. And finally, with the aid of Ezra Pound, he pulled himself together and did his most characteristic work. Here his creativity found release. However, he refused to recognize that the world was quite prepared to accept him, even if it did not always admire *Ulysses* and scoffed at *Work in Progress,* later *Finnegans Wake.* Harriet Weaver endowed him; the sympathetic ladies of the rue de l'Odéon, Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier, published, protected, and cushioned him. He quarreled with everyone. He sued at the drop of a hat. He invited strife. He was one of the greatest "injustice collectors" of all literature. I think it could be demonstrated that Joyce needed the censorship and contumely of the world; he could thereby vent his rage and consider himself insulted and injured. Some of his letters read as if written by Dostoevski's soliloquizing functionary in *Notes from the Underground.*

In particular there is much pathology in Joyce's erotic, childish let-

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ters to his wife, his common-law wife. His biographer speaks of "fetishism, anality, paranoia and masochism" but turns from Krafft-Ebing to praise Joyce's "Circean beguilements" and "vaudeville routines." No amount of self-mockery or literary heroics can conceal the sad, ugly truths. Strange laughter can still be the laughter of madness, and Joyce's wry comedy is a comedy of helpless megalomania. The artist filled with grandiosities walks "a way a lone a last a loved a long the"—as he tells us in the uncompleted final sentence of *Finnegans Wake* which leads us back to the book's beginning. It was one of his many insights into his personal self-containment. Another of his statements of his mental solitude is in *Ulysses:* "We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves."

He remains a curious memory. His eccentricities, which were those of madness, are often retold as if they were the inventions of genius; in part, I suppose, they were. His inwardness, his insolence, his world mockery, and his self-mockery make him one of the great curiosities of modern literature, which is what he will more and more become. It takes a certain kind of mind to give over endless pages simply to parody of cheap novels; it demands a curious kind of continuing obsessive hostility to mock the media as Joyce mocked them, although in mocking he acquired some of the cheapness of the media. His is one of the saddest histories of modern creation: genius burning itself out always on a downward curve from transcendence to pettiness. Even the magical *Finnegan* ultimately palls. He is hugely overshadowed by other great creative figures of our time—Yeats, to name his countryman; or even, at another extreme, Eliot; and even, in her watercolory way, Virginia Woolf, who could mock quite as brilliantly but had more of the stuff of literary art in her because she knew where to call a halt, where to round out and shape a form. Joyce's poems are slight. His tales are neat but not inspired; there have been finer masters of the short story. His drama is impossible; only *Ulysses* and *Finnegan* dramatize for us the new time-and-space dimensions of fiction and the new subjectivity of our century—and they resolve themselves into parody, wit, and word games. I am reduced to saying that Joyce's one true work of art is *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* He is becoming largely a child of the exegetes, although he also serves the needs of literary politics and academic dissertations. That, however, shouldn't be held against him.

To the miseries of Joyce's inwardness were added the physical torments of a dozen eye operations for cataracts, poor health, partial poverty at first, and then self-impoverishment by a grandeur of spending. He had his compulsive bouts of drunkenness. He had periods of depression during which he moved from "great irritation and impotent fury" to sud-

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den fits of weeping. This is the haunted and driven existence of which we are made spectators; and with this there was Joyce's way—I suppose by the combination of helplessness and mockery—of commanding always a circle of friends hypnotized by his virtuosity and prepared to immolate themselves on his altar. They received scant thanks for their pains, and are immortalized in the puns of *Finnegan.* Joyce wrote not for literature but for personal revenge. His motivations are confused, but there is something heroic in his ideal and in his sense of myth. He belongs to the witchcraft of words. He was Faust, but he thought himself Jesus—and Judas was everywhere.

I once heard an anecdote about Joyce told by an Englishman who remembered meeting, on a plane somewhere in Europe, a gentle and dignified woman who lived in Israel. In his conversation with her the name of Joyce came up, and she said that she had been one of Joyce's students when he taught at the Berlitz school in Trieste. She remembered him as well dressed and polite but that he also had, at times, a nasty and insolent tone. She spoke of him with some affection and described one evening when Joyce, coming out of the school with a few of his students, went with them to drink in a series of cafes. They drank much wine and were very happy together. In one place Joyce danced with her, lightly and gallantly. She had pinned a rose to her dress, and while they danced it fell to the floor. Joyce stooped to pick it up and, bowing, returned it to her with the words "I seem to have deflowered you." As the night advanced, Joyce became increasingly wine-happy. Long past midnight the group found itself in the central square of Trieste under a full, rich moon. The students were exchanging good-nights when the young woman looked about for Joyce. He had detached himself from the group and, lost to the world, was dancing those nimble steps which later were the delight of his friends on festive occasions. He danced in the moonlight with his enormous shadow that moved and darted with him eerily in choreographic arabesques, in rhythm to some music hidden within the man. She had never forgotten this moonlit memory of Joyce.

The anecdote is unforgettable even in its telling. This is the Joyce of literary history: a shadow larger than the man, a lone performer dancing with himself and his shadow, weaving in and out of his own rhythms, detached and lost in his own world which is both a hodgepodge of history and a potpourri of language. The last words of *Finnegans Wake* come to mind as we hear the anecdote—*a way a lone a last.* It is the virtuoso sufficient unto himself, cut off from his fellows by his virtuosity, and by this selfsame virtuosity establishing strange and awesome communication with them. Joyce, wine-lost, dancing with himself by the light of the moon: the history of Joyce's art may be read in this act.

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The Kiss

PHILIP MURRAY

Her husband saw it. But no man in all
The British Isles would have disapproved.
Bath House, late one early summer night
In eighteen-fifty, at a grand soirée
Given by Lord Ashburton; Aristocracy *en fleur*:
The Spring Rices (afterward Lord Monteagle),
The Stanleys of Alderley, the Bullers, ancient Lady Holland.

After midnight, the old Duke glided in,
Wearing his Garter-order and a gold-buckled stock;
A slightish figure, his legs were the shortest part of him,
Of good breath for eighty-two, simple, graceful, noble;
His face gentle, wise, valiant, venerable,
And his tenor voice musical, still uncracked.

Slowly he moved along, slightly saluting
This Heathen Goddess, that Millionaire, Marshall
Of Leeds, *young* Lady Lothian, Lady William Russell,
Dowager Lady Sandwich, a few hungry witches,
And ornamental mummies, speaking only when
Spoken to, one turn around the room;
He scarcely seemed to know what he was doing.

Then—but let Thomas Carlyle remember it
After twenty years, and in his eighth decade,
Who saw his Darling Wife, Jane Welsh Carlyle,
That gracious queen-like woman at forty-eight,
An ever ingenuous, stylish Scottish coquette,
"Softly step up and (unnoticed as she thought
By anybody) kiss the old Duke of Wellington's shoulder."

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Humane Education

ROGER SCRUTON

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES, having been granted its charter by Congress, was also provided from the same source with a definition of its scope. "The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics . . ." and also "those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods." Certain features of this list raise intellectual questions, two of which will occupy me here. Is there any positive conception of a "humanity"? And are there "humanistic methods"? The purpose in asking these questions is to understand the nature of humane education.

Our present classification of university subjects reflects a complicated history. Until Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, little attempt was made to distinguish genuine science from subjects of study which either did not or could not exhibit experimental method. "Natural history" and "natural philosophy" existed as fragmentary and encyclopedic collections. While important and undifferentiated parts of the Greek corpus, they were tolerated with less patience in the Roman tradition of oratory, with its single-minded aim of producing (in Quintilian's words) *vir bonus, dicendi peritus*—the good man, skilled in speech. The disciplines of medicine and architecture, added to the Roman liberal arts by Varro, were almost immediately removed again by Martianus Capella, leaving the seven subjects which provided the basis of education from late antiquity to the Renaissance.

How did the idea of a humane education emerge from this tradition? Cicero used the term *humanitas* to express the general idea of cultural refinement—an idea later expressed as *civilitas* by John of Salisbury (*cf.* modern uses of the term "civilized"). Petrarch intended to revive this idea as an educational aim when, in comparing his own intellectual standpoint with the traditions of scholasticism, he referred to the *studia humaniora*, the "more human studies." By the time of Leonardo Bruni (1436), the general designation of the classics, and the disciplines associated with them, as *studia humanitatis* was beginning to be conventional.

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Our contemporary conception of the humanities has evolved out of this early Renaissance compendium by a process of steady elimination, followed by one of unsteady addition. If we ask what has been eliminated, the answer seems fairly clear—science. Now, it is true that the ancients (following Aristotelian thought) divided subjects into the theoretical and the practical, and believed this classification to correspond to a deep distinction among mental faculties. But the distinction was characterized obscurely, and important questions were left undecided. To which category, for example, does music belong? Together with geometry and astronomy, it was taught as part of the quadrivium, a practice that conflicted sharply with the descriptions of the educational nature of music given in the political works of Plato and Aristotle. And it would now be very unusual to think that music has an educational affinity with geometry. Likewise rhetoric—which is, superficially at least, a practical accomplishment—was studied in a quasi-theoretical way, so as to include classical languages, literature, and other subjects of bookish learning.

The scientific revolution brought with it the view that certain subjects have a special claim to objectivity. The subjects that we now know as sciences are characterized, first, by the attempt to understand the world as an entity independent of our ways of perceiving it and, second, by their potentiality for "progress." The two features go together. If the world exists independent of our perception, then the task of understanding it will be cumulative. Learning will "advance," sometimes retracing its steps but moving, in the long run, from ignorance to truth. Science involves prediction, experiment, theory, the division of the world into "natural kinds." It involves that complex but familiar thing called scientific method, the aim of which is the knowledge of how things are. As for the humanities, they are what remain when science is removed. Perhaps they are nearer to our apprehension of ourselves than any science; for they do not seem to be founded, as science is founded, on a sharp distinction between how things are and how things seem. But it is not clear what we can say about them, or why we should feel that they have anything in common, other than the fact that they are not yet scientific. The National Endowment's reference to the "humanistic" parts of the social sciences reflects a sense that the scientific claims of those subjects have not yet been substantiated; they are therefore temporarily resident in the house of the humanities. But perhaps nothing remains in this house, or ought to remain there, for long.

Men are part of nature and are subjects of scientific inquiry. So there ought to be sciences, perhaps unborn, which will usurp the subject matter of the studies called humane. How, then, can we believe that there is

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anything objective in humane education? Are there limits to scientific inquiry, parts of nature which are recalcitrant to its methods? Or is there some other way of knowing the world than the way of science? I do not think it is coherent to suggest that there are limits to scientific inquiry. To say that there are parts of nature which lie beyond the purview of science is, in effect, to say that there are parts of nature which do not obey nature's laws. Any defense of the humanities which relies on this self-contradiction is dangerous, in that it discredits the cause which it pretends to uphold. It is unfortunate that so many modern American academics, in their desire to uphold traditional educational values, have had recourse to that contradiction, arguing as though the humanities were autonomous and valuable simply because they could not be understood by those opposed to them.

How should we defend them? We must show that there can be a study of natural objects which cannot be reducible to scientific inquiry. And we must show that this study is valuable; it must be a form of education. If it exists, then it will provide us with our positive conception of the humanities, our criterion for including, and also for excluding, potential members from the National Endowment's list. Nineteenth-century philosophical anthropology tried hard to identify this unscientific mode of knowledge. Under the influence of Kant and Vico, thinkers of the period were disposed to represent human things as having two contrasting aspects: nature and freedom. The more sensible among them did not refer to the two worlds of "the empirical" and "the noumenal"—the scientifically knowable and the arcane. Nor did they speak of facts which are inaccessible to science. They spoke rather of the world of science and the world of culture, which are in one sense the same world but which cannot be known in the same way. The world of culture, the "human world," comes to us imbued with our way of knowing it. It is a reflection of ourselves, but a reflection made objective. To understand it we must cultivate the peculiar faculty—the faculty of *Verstehen*—which we use to understand ourselves.

Such doctrines, which find expression in Dilthey, in Weber, and in many others, are undeniably obscure. But that they might contain a truth is shown by a very simple example. A portrait consists of pigments spread upon a canvas, and from the scientific point of view that is *all* it contains. But of course it is also a law of nature that beings like us will react to portraits in certain complex ways. This law of nature has never been formulated, but in any case we can dispense with it. For we understand portraits without its aid. We see these colored patches as a face and, seeing them so, gain access to the human reality of the picture. The face is not an additional feature of the portrait, above and beyond the colored patches that make it up. But we do not see the face if we look

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only at the colored patches. The human reality of these patches is not their scientific reality, because it comes to us mingled with our manner of perception. It is *we* who put the face in the picture; but it is there to stay, and we are obliged, if we can, to understand it.

I think that the suggestion that there is a "human world" which is observable only to the person who has, and who cultivates, human understanding takes sustenance from such examples. It is obvious that the face in the picture is both objective—it belongs in the world—and yet not truly separable from our human capacity to recognize it. (It is only there for us; it is not there for a dog or a scientist.) The face is a tiny episode in what the Hegelians would call "objective spirit." And, as we know, there is an art in seeing pictures. The capacity to see this fragment of the human world can be cultivated, developed, educated.

The example has a certain rhetorical appeal, but it cannot stand alone as establishing the nature of humane education. We must show that there are modes of reflection proper to the understanding of the human world. These modes of reflection must not be mere skills. They must involve definite conceptual capacities: abilities to make comparisons, and to impose order on experience. I shall take architecture as an example. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that there is a conflict between those who regard architecture as a science, those who regard it as a skill, and those who regard it as something different from both. Now if to regard architecture as a skill is to regard it as a means to an end (however complicated the end and however sophisticated the means to it), then the first two parties will agree about what is to be taught in a school of architecture. The "science" of architecture will be nothing more than the theory of a skill, concerned with representing, in theoretical terms, the means to given ends. The acquisition of the skill is the acquisition of the ability to employ those means, and so depends on their discovery.

The third party will not concede that architecture can be so easily defined. He will say that it involves something else—the exploration of style, the knowledge of the aesthetic properties of details, of materials, of manners, of light and shade. Is this knowledge practical or theoretical? You could put the difficulty in another way: architectural knowledge is not of means, but of ends. It is therefore not a skill, and is irreducible to the scientific methods that are subservient to skill. It retains something of the practical, for it involves knowing what to do, and something of the theoretical, since it requires classification and comparison. But the classifications and comparisons point not to scientific truth but to human interest; they are concerned with the understanding of architecture as a feature of the human, and not of the natural, world.

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A very simple example of a nonscientific classification is that of ornamental marbles. These include porphyry (a silicate), onyx (an oxide), marble (a carbonate), and exclude limestone (chemically identical to marble and differing only in crystalline structure). The classification clearly does not name what philosophers would call a "natural kind"; it is not the preface to a scientific explanation. The laws governing the behavior and appearance of these stones would not use this concept but others, which the classification cuts across and to which it is irreducible. Nevertheless those laws would explain the properties of the stones which lead us to classify them as ornamental marbles. So in one sense the natural science of crystallography will generate all the truths of the matter. But it will not help us to understand the classification that we employ. Someone could remain ignorant of the nature of ornamental marbles, whatever the state of his scientific knowledge. The classification is genuine (there is something that a stone has to be in order to be an ornamental marble); yet it is a prelude not to scientific inquiry but to a complex aesthetic use. The appearance of an ornamental marble is understood only by those who are sensitive toward that use; they must become familiar with the place of ornamental marbles in our ways of perceiving and responding to buildings. One comes to understand the classification by learning to see the appearance of a material in a human context. That context endows the appearance with a meaning.

With this kind of classification we move about on the surface of things. We classify objects according to their felt significance, not according to the postulates of a predictive science. (In matters of human significance it is always the surface, and what can be brought to the surface, that counts.) It may be, therefore, that we cannot take for granted the ideals of convergence of opinion and of progress, which stem from the scientific view of the world. The end of our inquiry may not be a single body of recognized truths that state how things are, independent of our capacities to observe and discover them. In this more human world, our natural capacities to observe and discover, to feel and respond, enter into the description of how things are, and convergence, if it is to be secured at all, must be secured in some other way. Convergence persists as an ideal, but perhaps it is never to be realized: what is given is not the fact of it, but its common pursuit. Nevertheless, we are beginning to see that there may be distinctive educational processes through which this common pursuit can be advanced and retarded. How are these processes to be defined?

Whether or not architecture is to be considered as a "humanity" (would that it were!), there are additions to our list of humanities that can be instantly recognized as illegitimate. Consider, for example, those second-order subjects or metadisciplines which are at present becoming

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fashionable. The guiding principle of these disciplines is that of relevance—education being conceived not as an end but as a means to some independent social goal. Examples in the humanities include "Women's Studies" and "Black Studies"—roughly "For any underprivileged X, X Studies." Many people oppose the suggestion that these constitute genuine subjects but cannot say why—which is indicative of the confusion common to all those who know that humane education is worthwhile and yet cannot find the reason. Can we explain their hostility?

Let us take a hypothetical example. "Mathematics Studies" is a degree option for those who dislike the barren rigors of old-fashioned mathematics and who wish to see mathematics in its "wider context," as a discipline potentially relevant to the problems facing "industrial man." This degree offers courses in the sociology of mathematics (which studies the effect of "disprivileged background" on mathematical eminence, and of mathematical competence on social standing); the psychology of mathematics (which is very dry, except for the section devoted to the unconscious); the philosophy of mathematics (which, being unable to presuppose any competence in logic, stays with the jargon of "dialectical" thought); and the history of mathematics; with options in "mathematical art," "Pythagorean cosmology," "number symbolism," and "the universal history of the number 2." Nobody will suppose that such subjects produce understanding, either of mathematics or of anything else. It is impossible to gauge what qualities of mind would be adapted to them or what value or discipline would result from their pursuit. The subject of Mathematics Studies is pure fantasy, and even sociologists might consider that inflicting it on students would be unfair, at least not before "further research." What is wrong is fairly evident: Mathematics Studies involves no critical reflection on a given field of inquiry and no methods which constrain that field. The true critical appraisal of mathematics is reserved for those with a mathematical understanding; those who emerge with a degree in this field cannot assess or dispute a mathematical proof, nor do they acquire any other intellectual accomplishment that would show itself in reasoned critical reflection, applicable beyond the range of examples which have nourished it.

It seems to me that analogous defects attend the other newly proposed additions to the humanities. Women's Studies is not defined by any process of critical reflection which constrains from within the matters to be studied, but by external interests whose focus is not education but politics. It is impossible to isolate the work of women poets from a tradition created by men; it is impossible to understand the social reality of womanhood without studying manhood; it is impossible to hold the jar of civilization to the light and expect the feminine and the masculine to separate themselves like oil and water, so that their properties can be in-

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dependently observed. All we have, and all we shall ever have, is a collection of intellectual fragments: applications of this or that humane discipline by students who have neither the time nor the interest to master any of them, and the spawning of "problems" that are as unreal as the subject which gives them academic respectability. But is the case of Women's Studies exactly like that of Mathematics Studies? I think they have this in common—that in both there is no intellectual relation between the things which are studied, and therefore no real field of study. By "intellectual relation" I mean a relation by which knowledge of one thing can be brought to bear on questions about another. When this relation exists, then the field of study will be constrained by it, as mathematics is constrained by the discipline of mathematical proof.

We have the feeling that it is not just tradition which has created our idea of the "humane" subject. The tradition has endured because it enshrines what is genuine. The sign of a genuine discipline is the existence of an intellectual constraint which unites its parts. It would be begging any questions to speak of method. But consider music or architecture. Is it not true to say that, as one comes to understand any one of the questions considered in these disciplines, so one finds it easier to understand the others? And is it not true that the mode of understanding in each case constrains the subject, forcing the student to recognize that some music or architecture is serious and some not, that some problems in musical analysis or architectural theory are problems and others mere confusion or bluff?

But the fact that certain subjects lead us to *believe* that they are genuine does not silence the skeptic. Many scientists, for example, find it difficult to recognize the limits of their subjects, and use their methods in areas where we feel (again without being able to say why) that they do not apply. People say that there is a science called economics and that it has some bearing on the government of nations. This may be an impertinence or it may be a serious truth; it is difficult to know which. Is this because there *is* a science, but its subject matter is unclear? Or because there is neither science nor subject? Or because government, as part of the human world, is to be understood, not scientifically, but with the aid of the education we call humane? I am inclined toward the third of those views, and hence see an enormous political significance in defining the nature and scope of the humanities. But the problem is difficult, perhaps insoluble. Our intuitions abandon us just here, where we need them most. The least that we can say is that the idea of a subject as constrained by an intellectual discipline has to be further examined, and something must be said about the peculiarity of a constraint that is not scientific. Should we speak of method here? Or should we try to give some other content to the notion of a common pursuit?

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I think that three things can be said in answer to those questions. The first can be illustrated by returning to the example of ornamental marble, which showed that there can be a genuine classification, the application of which involves considerable understanding but which does not pass the barrier from *seeming* to *being*. It is a classification of appearances, but not the mere appearance of a classification. On the contrary, it focuses on human attitudes of the greatest significance and power. In understanding it we also understand those attitudes, in their objective, "realized" form. So it seems that genuine knowledge can be enshrined in such classifications—a knowledge, to put it simply, of human nature. The whole art of architecture is like that. Properly understood, architecture involves a knowledge of the properties of materials, forms, and structures in terms of their resonance in the human spirit. Architecture is a study of the lived surface of things. Because this study constantly seeks to find what things belong together (as the parts of an architectural order belong together), it is also a discipline. But it can be understood as such only if we see that the unifying principle must reside in an affinity that is perceived. Ornamental marbles share a common spirit; the origin of that spirit is in us, and the delight we take in them is in the human projection that they help us to achieve. The constraint implicit in humane education is always of that kind: it involves the discovery of spiritual relationships. These relationships are real, but not scientific. In understanding them we are understanding ourselves.

As we turn from architecture to literature, this last thought will seem both true and difficult. We know that criticism proceeds by comparison and analysis, and that it seeks for the spiritual significance of literature. We know, too, that it looks ridiculous as soon as it is divorced from the study of human nature and the values through which human nature finds enactment. But we find it very difficult to ascribe to literary criticism any such thing as a method, nor can we state in clear terms a single aim which it pursues. This points us to a second feature of the constraint that is intrinsic to the true humanity. The constraint has a kind of autonomy; it is resistant to scientific method and irreducible to it. When we try to import scientific method into a humane subject, we find that we are no longer talking about the same thing. This is illustrated by the many recent attempts to import the technicalities and theories of linguistics into the study of literature. The attempt, associated with names like "semiology," "semiotics," and "hermeneutics," has led to nothing but intellectual confusion. What proudly announces itself as a method always turns out, on examination, to be an elaborate irrelevance. The sciences from which semiotics borrows its vocabulary are not concerned with the critical interpretation of literature, but with something quite different. They describe language as a natural object, obedient to laws which could

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be formulated and understood even by the man who could not speak the language and who had no knowledge of the human spirit which found expression through it. The technical terms of linguistics, in being twisted into critical usage, must therefore become metaphors, and the science suffers a systematic translation from theory to jargon. It then becomes necessary to remove the jargon in order to discover that the procedures of literary criticism, of musical analysis, or whatever, have remained entirely unchanged by its introduction. To prove this point is not easy, but I think that it can be shown. (See my attempt in *London Review of Books*, February 7, 1980.)

This inherent resistance to scientific method is one of the most important features of humane education, showing it to be irreplaceable by science. If that is so, then there really is a positive conception of the humanities. Some subjects are humanities because they cannot make the passage from the *studia humanitatis* to the realm of scientific inquiry.

Why should that be so? What explains the impervious quality of a subject like literary criticism? Someone might say that these questions have no answer, that literary criticism, music, and so on are peculiar subjects and all their procedures are intrinsic. But to construe the autonomy of humane education so strictly is to risk losing sight of its value. An important feature of education is that it induces mental competence. It equips the student with habits of thought which are not merely exhausted by the subject that he studies but which enable him to extend his understanding in new and sometimes unforeseen directions. Writing early in the twelfth century, Hugh of Saint Victor, in his *Didascalion*, argued that this was true of the seven liberal arts. "These seven [the ancients] considered so to excel all the rest in usefulness that anyone who had been thoroughly schooled in them might afterwards come to a knowledge of other subjects by his own inquiry and effort, rather than by listening to a teacher." Clearly this feature is always in our minds when we try to decide whether a given subject constitutes "an education." It was the professed aim of Rhetoric to fit a man for public life. More recently, people have thought that Classics, or English, or even Philosophy might (in the right hands) constitute such an education, endowing a man with the capacity to perceive and understand not simply the matters which he had been taught but other matters which he had not. This is our picture of the civilized mind. But we cannot have such a picture if we insist on the absolute autonomy of the humanistic disciplines. So we must seek elsewhere for an explanation of their resistance to scientific method.

This leads me to my final point, which is that the distinction between humane and scientific understanding has a more general basis. Everything worthwhile in education stems from the attempt to answer the

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question "Why?" A literary critic tells you why a certain word, line, or paragraph is as it is. The architect tells you why a window frame has the shape you see; the musician tells you why a given chord is inverted; and so on. All the learning that accumulates in the study of language, literature, and the arts is useless unless it brings the answer to such questions. But the scientist too asks "Why?" He seeks the explanation of events, and looks for the laws of nature that provide it. But the question "Why?" means something different in either case. The scientific "Why?" seeks a cause and the laws from which causes emanate. The humane "Why?" seeks a reason. This reason usually names no laws and forswears prediction; it is concerned to make the phenomenon intelligible. It enables the observer to see an order and reason in events; this order lies on the surface, like the meaning in a sentence or the spirit in a face.

All our examples of humane education involve subjects in which the "Why?" of reason can be pursued with gathering momentum. Understanding one poem, you are more ready for the next; gradually a subject unfolds before you and becomes intelligible as an expression of the human spirit. If we want a general account of this "Why?" of reason, and how it differs from the "Why?" of cause, then we should look away from the world of objective spirit to humanity itself—to subjective spirit. It is there, in our instinctive understanding of ourselves and others, that the "Why?" of reason has its fundamental use. We can see at once that it is not the "Why?" of cause. A man's behavior becomes intelligible when I see the world through his eyes. I see how one particular object can be desirable for him, another repulsive. I see the order in his experience: this does not mean explaining it or subsuming it under a universal law, but understanding the complexities of perception that answer for him the question "Why?" I see why he would do what he did, feel what he did, and so on. The lived surface of his world is transmitted to me and, in knowing the reason why, I feel within myself the promptings of a motive that is his. This human understanding, so different from prediction, manipulation, or explanation, is the origin of our moral sense. The British moralists called it sympathy. Others have spoken of intuition, of empathy, of sensibility, of *Verstehen*. Vico, as Sir Isaiah Berlin has shown, attempted to give a complete theory of its nature. Yet one thing is sure. Whatever we call it, and however we analyze it, it exists. Moreover, it is indispensable to us, and irreplaceable by any natural science of man. Therefore we must defend as best we can the education which refines and embellishes it. This means that we must cease to fabricate those false humanities which turn attention away from the world of experience toward confused political goals, while depriving students of the education through which those goals can be understood.

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I. A. Richards

HELEN VENDLER

I. A. Richards was the most extraordinary teacher of poetry I ever encountered, and this essay, in dwelling on Richards as a teacher, must necessarily present an incomplete view of a many-sided man. I audited two of Richards's courses at Harvard in the fifties; one was an undergraduate course in poetry, the other a graduate seminar in Shelley and Plato. A little later, I saw Richards give two television series: in the first, he repeated parts of the undergraduate poetry course; in the second, he presented excerpts from his Basic English version of the *Iliad.* Videotapes were made of both series; one set burned in the fire at Boston's Channel 2; the other set, Richards told me, was deposited, but then misplaced, at Harvard's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. That set may yet reappear to corroborate memories of Richards as a teacher. Until then, personal reminiscence must attempt to convey some sense of his magical presence.

Richards entered the hall in Harvard Yard where the large poetry course was to be held, saw the overcrowded room with undergraduates seated on the floor, heard the fire sirens shrieking from the Broadway fire station, and pronounced emphatically (quoting Arnold's Callicles), "Not here, O Apollo, are haunts fit for thee!" Those were the first words I heard him speak, and they were spoken in that voice, of unforgettable depth and emphasis, which gave words a luster they usually possess only in the mouths of remarkable actors. (When Richards, in 1971 at Harvard, took the role of the Trojan rhapsode in a dramatic version of his *Iliad*, it was, one could say, typecasting). But quite aside from the eloquence with which they were spoken, Richards's first words in that class surprised in themselves; they were not concerned with class lists, or syllabi; they were addressed to Apollo as though he existed still (and to Richards, a thoroughgoing believer in Platonic forms, Apollo was an eternal Being), and they assumed that our classroom would become (if a fit one could be found) a haunt of Apollo. I cannot emphasize too much the utter absence of irony in Richards's quotation. Many of us, as teachers, might make some such remark ironically and subside into our geographical lot. Richards moved the class to the quiet of Radcliffe Yard, and Apollo, or so it seemed to me, consented to frequent Longfellow Hall.

There were other surprises. The room was totally dark. The undergraduates were thereby prevented from doing their calculus homework, writing each other notes, or indeed taking notes on what Richards said—all admirable results. On a screen, up front, up high, very large, were projected, by a slide projector, the words of a poem—always, without exception, a great poem. (Richards never condescended to students.) The poem appeared a stanza or so at a time. Richards stood below the screen, his back to us, a long pointer in his hand. We saw the back of his head, and its halo of floating white hair. He was *not* interested—at that moment—in us; he was absorbed in the poem, as it was expected we should be. (We had scarcely any choice, since in the dark it was our only possible object of attention.) The large words took on an aura they cannot possess on the page—"as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen."

I still think this the ideal way to teach poetry without distraction, but it requires help—to make the slides, to project the

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slides, to darken the room—which not all of us have. But it is, at most, a facilitating measure; it alone would not have accounted for Richards's spectacular effect.

That effect arose from two root causes. The first, of which the reference to Apollo is an example, was Richards's compelled and compelling belief in the absolute reality of the world of poetry. It was not, for him, parallel to the world of life; it was coextensive with it, and was the means of deepest penetration into it. In that belief, he was Arnoldian and Ruskinian; poetry had replaced religion as the source of a culture's deepest self-insight. In beholding Richards, one beheld the last of the great Victorians (or so I felt); he had their buoyancy in crisis, their resilience of inquiry, their appetite for knowledge, their confidence in the soul of man, their indomitable will. He also showed their overmastering sense of doubt—doubt of the most sacred and of the most conventionally hallowed beliefs, doubt of the relation between the active and the contemplative life, doubt of the function of empire. It was his most attractive personal quality, that mixture of assertion and query, that exhibition of what one might call dogmatic doubt; it had the charm of the magisterial combined with the charm of the speculative, a heady mixture for his students, who envied his certainties while ensnared in his speculativeness.

Richards read us the whole poem, all through, as it passed before us on the screen. It made no difference that there may have been scarcely a soul in the room who could understand Donne's "Extasie" on first seeing and hearing it: we had a right to the whole poem, and to what Richards always referred to (borrowing the word from Donne) as the mutual "interinanimation" of its parts, before we began to take it in more slowly. Though there was great simplicity in this view, there was also great cunning; Richards-as-reader-aloud was quintessentially Richards-the-interpreter, casting the poem into the guise he saw it wear. No one hearing Richards read "The Extasie" could ever subscribe to the vulgar reductiveness which makes it simply a libertine poem of seduction. No one hearing Richards read "To His Coy Mistress" could think the mistress the center of the poem, not with the "desarts of vast eternity" and the "slow-chap't" power of time resonating in the room. In one sense, Richards's work was done, once his powerful interpretation-through-enunciation had lodged itself in our ears.

But that was only the beginning and here I come to the second cause of Richards's success as a lecturer. Richards worked less by paraphrase than by collocation. Next to a poem by Keats, he placed, by quotation, passages from earlier Keats, the Old and New Testaments, Porphyry, Yeats, Sir Thomas Browne, Milton, Marvell, Swinburne, Wycliffe, Blake, Shakespeare, Eliot, Byron, Spenser, and Plato. This class (later a television program) on the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" has been published, under the title "Beauty and Truth," in Richards's *Complementarities*; interested readers may deduce from it something of Richards's method. He bestowed a considerable bounty on us as we listened—tantalizing fragments of the two great Byzantium poems by Yeats (my first acquaintance with "Byzantium"), two stanzas of Spenser's "Hymne of Heavenly Beautie" (also, to me, ravishingly new), a brief flash of Swinburne:

> And soft as lips that laugh and hide
> The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
> And screen from seeing and leave in sight
> The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The "interinanimations" were, as the fashionable word now has it, intertextual as well as intratextual. What we were seeing was the Ricardian mind launching out filament, filament, filament, like Whitman's spider, creating before us a replica of his radiant verbal universe, in which no word stood lonely.

Most teachers of literature lack Richards's tenacious memory, and could not hope to range, as he did, without books, without notes, from the Greeks to the moderns. But there is a great deal to be said for straying, in any class, beyond the confines of the author of the day, to make students feel how wholly a mind which admires Keats will also admire the *Symposium*, or the Psalms, or Spenser. It was a world, not a text, to which Richards introduced his students.

If placing a single word or image in juxtaposition with its appearance elsewhere was Richards's first way of conveying its "meaning," he did not evade pursuing "meaning" to its ampler reaches. He never failed in deli-

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cacy in this most difficult of tasks; I think it was for this delicacy that I revered him. We have all, in teaching, heard our own failures in tone—exaggerations innocently enough meant, perhaps, in an effort to persuade young readers or enliven a dull day—but nonetheless lapses regrettable as failures to trust the poem to do its own work: Richards was never less than exquisite, at the same time never less than firm. He never vulgarized; he never condescended; he was never reductive; he never patronized his author; he never underestimated his students. How he gained this heroic equipoise I cannot imagine. Why he thought well enough of us—if he thought of us at all, his mind so wholly on the poets—to address us as if we understood the mysteries of life and death, is to me a mystery. Perhaps he learned his manner from Socrates. Or Confucius. I will give only one example of a serious remark (again, from the class on the Urn, which I recall as the single best class he gave, and from which I draw still, as I approach Keats). Richards is speaking of the way Keats passes, in illustrating his urn, from scenes of love and music to a scene of sacrifice:

> It is by this sacrifice that the other side of the Urn as we turn to it becomes so poignantly fulfilling. We need though to remind ourselves of how central to men's hopes and fears his ritual sacrifice of his best has been.

It may be risky to speak to twenty-year-olds in such Orphic terms. But for me, Richards's classes were classes in perception as well as art. There was a great deal I did not, in my youth, ignorance, and innocence, understand; but I understood that Richards knew, and the poets knew, things about sacrifice, renunciation, hopes, and fears that I did not yet know, but could hope to know. "In brief," as Richards put it, "the way of Love and the way of Knowledge meet."

It is important to distinguish Richards's manner of enunciating moral remarks, such as the one on sacrifice, from comparable remarks made in a religious vein. Richards's vein was unalterably polemic, not hortatory. He was in every case defending his poet against misinterpretation. "The prose of discussion," Richards remarked in an early essay—a remark which perfectly expresses his own lively critical practice—"is grounded, if not in an instinct, at least upon a tradition of combativeness." He said this in explaining his instinct to mount "a major assault" on certain positions of J. Middleton Murry. "The cannon, in fact, are itching to go off," he added with a certain joyful candor.

Richards's classes, in consequence, never had a lugubrious seriousness. There was an élan about them that emerged in his puckish delight in making critical mischief. His chief targets were those who affected a wisdom greater than the poets'. I give an example from the Urn class, on the line "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty":

> Of these lines an authority writes: "But, of course, to put it solidly, that is a vague observation—to anyone whom life has taught to face facts and define his terms, actually an uneducated conclusion, albeit pardonable in one so young." The Urn isn't exactly "so young"—is it? But, of course, this critic carelessly supposes that these concluding lines are uttered by Keats, not by the Urn.

Richards's same elfin relish in others' misreadings glitters through *Practical Criticism* (1929); no one has ever so enjoyed, while deploring, the grotesque misunderstandings of texts. The Cambridge undergraduates who produced the famous "protocols" on set texts, exhibiting their stock responses, moral inadequacy, sentimentality, and simple illiteracy, became the prototypes of all those whom Richards wished to—it is not too strong a word—save. "Our purpose, which was Plato's, is saving society and our souls," he said in wartime (1942).

All Richards's work—writing and teaching alike—may be summed up as a lifelong campaign against illiteracy. The first, and worst, illiteracy is an inability to read—to decode letters assembled into words. Against that illiteracy, Richards developed with Christine Gibson the stick-figure books in language teaching, the Language Through Pictures series. He thought that film and television could teach the world's illiterates to read; without him, we might not have seen a program like "Sesame Street" on television. He worried about the illiteracy, in large world languages, of isolated linguistic groups; he believed, all his life, that Basic English, if it were mastered as a world language, could eliminate potentially disastrous misunderstandings between

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cultures. To that end, he wished to present, in Basic, the chief cultural documents of the West—Homer, Plato, Job—because he knew that the East does not understand the West by learning its vocabulary; it must also become acquainted with its cultural ideals and norms.

Richards once told an amusing and horrifying story of the "illiteracy" of the "literate," to illustrate the need, if true "literacy" were to be achieved in a foreign culture, of something more than language mastery. He was teaching, in China, a group of Chinese teachers of English. They had mastered English vocabulary and English grammar in literary and spoken form; the set text for the class was *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and they had reached the end. Richards read them the harrowing close of the novel, with Tess's execution: "The President of the Immortals . . . had ended his sport with Tess." The class, with every appearance of satisfaction, burst into approving applause. Richards was taken aback, and asked them why they clapped. "Because she was a wicked girl who had disobeyed her elders, and was suitably punished." Every word had been understood, but their Chinese cultural respect for elders had prevented understanding of the Hardy ethic.

For Richards, tradition and context were the controlling factors enabling us to distinguish, as he said, misreadings from variant readings. Among the New Critics, no one was more sensitive to the resonances among texts—and not only the reverberations among literary texts, but between literary texts and those others—historical, philosophical, and religious—which influenced the poets. In that sense, Richards's campaign for literacy reached toward the education of his fellow critics: woe to the critic who had no sense of the wider context.

In a public lecture of which I forget the topic, Richards once said, with entire sincerity, "Think of the planet!" I was, in my twenties, quite unaccustomed to any such focus. It may be that students raised in an atmosphere of political awareness had a wider consciousness than the bookish one I possessed; but I was shocked into interior protest. How could I think of "the planet"? It was too difficult! But it was evident that the planet—and not England, not America, not Cambridge, not Harvard—was Richards's sphere of reference. In some inchoate way, I sensed that his masters—Plato, Milton, Coleridge—may have been thinking in terms of the planet too, if not quite in Richards's very practical and up-to-date ways. For a young woman whose sphere was expected to be the kitchen or at most the classroom, it was invigorating to be expected to think of the planet.

Richards's dismay at illiteracy may have grown out of his philosophical studies with G. E. Moore when he did moral sciences at Cambridge, or out of his work in *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) with C. K. Ogden, or out of his reflexive meditations in *Interpretation in Teaching* (1938). His interest in intercultural understanding (and incomprehension) grew from his visits to China and his long residence as a foreigner at Harvard, where, as University Professor, he interested himself in theories of education and in the possibilities of electronic aids to literacy (from television to computers), all the while teaching literature.

In his last two decades he became a poet. The poetry was gnarled, intellectual, angular, unsparing. Richards was perhaps too conscious of semantic instability to use words with heedless instinct; nonetheless, the books of verse came to seem, for me, ratifications of what his students, if not his readers, sensed in Richards—the poet manqué. His acute sense of the tactility of language, his ear for nuance in the spoken word, his kinesthetic catching of a subtle rhythm, his learnedness in what we might call "Poetic" (a language like "Basic") were all those of a poet. Though his writing, perhaps in deference to his century, aspired toward a scientific accuracy, his teaching was that of a Welsh evangelist—fervent in seriousness, deep with belief, stern in fidelity to the word, and rich in celebratory language. He *saw* language as well as heard it; it is not surprising that in 1926 he wrote one of the first articles on Hopkins, a poet who heard and saw language in a way that would have seemed instantly congenial to Richards. Coleridge, Richards's true master, represents the other side of Richards—the side that yearned after universal knowledge, an all-encompassing system. The two aspects of his mind, poetic and philosophic, were never quite reconciled. He admired "philosophical" lyric poets (Shelley, Coleridge, and

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Hardy among them) and this admiration led him to a prolonged inquiry into the function of statement in poetry; it is unfortunate that the term he invented ("pseudo-statement") to cover the peculiar truth-value of statements in poetry was widely misunderstood (he meant it scientifically, as in "pseudopod," but it was taken as contemptuous). Nonetheless, his courage in investigating the function of symbolic statement was matched only by the utter absence of sentimentality in his discourse on the worth of poetry. It should be recorded that he never, not once, in my experience, brought into the classroom his own critical quarrels. The class time belonged not to him, but to the poets. He served the poets not self-effacingly—his self was too original and assertive to be effaced—but cooperatively: his mind and memory were at the service of the poem. The more powerful the mind and memory devoted to them, the more worth devotion the poems appeared.

At the end of his life, in 1979, Richards had the great pleasure of reentering China and teaching classes there to university students. It was to be the last act of his intellectual life: he fell ill there and died on his return to England. There are photographs that show him seated at a desk in a Chinese classroom; on the blackboard is written, in large letters, *A Warm Welcome to Dr. Richards.* The students, in the stifling heat of summer, are excited and smiling in one picture, bent in concentration in another. That taxing effort to be yet once again a bridge between East and West was Richards's last endeavor in teaching. His "gratuitous rashness" (a trip to China in his mid-eighties) and his "serpentine hesitation" of thought—both phrases are Robert Lowell's about Richards—remained in dialectic to the end of his life. To those who thought him overingenious, we can offer his own reply (from a poem called "Sunrise"):

> You make broad day your house;
> My mind moves with the bat, the owl, the mouse.

In the "dark passages" of art, Richards moved with the wisdom of the owl, the instinct of the bat, the soft inquiry of the mouse. In his classes, the dark places of poetry were explored for us who had made broad day our house; it was not by accident that it was in the dark, where only the words of the poets glowed on a screen, that Richards awoke new exploratory instincts in us.

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TEACHING II

Ruth Benedict

VICTOR BARNOUW

In the spring of 1941 I took a course on Social Organization of Primitive Peoples given by Ruth Benedict at Columbia University. In those days graduate students in anthropology were not expected, as they usually are now, to have taken various prerequisite anthropology courses as undergraduates, for few such courses were then offered. Except for Ralph Linton's Introduction to Anthropology, I had no background in this field; so during my first semester in the fall of 1940 I was rather lost—learning phonetics in one course, archaeological methods in a second, bodily measurements and identification of bones in a third. I also attended the Linton-Kardiner seminar on Psychological Analysis of Primitive Cultures. None of these courses had any relation to any of the others, apart from the fact that they all had to do with human beings.

Consequently, in my second semester I had hopeful expectations for Professor Benedict's Social Organization course. Perhaps an authority on cultural integration, as she was, could help to pull these disparate fields together. It turned out, however, that much of the course dealt with the analysis of kinship systems. As homework assignments, the students were given lists of kinship terms from particular societies and were required to figure out the systems from the terms. I used to meet with a fellow student to draw up kinship charts and to prepare for the next session. We laughed helplessly over the outlandish complications of these systems, trying to figure out why an Omaha mother's brother's daughter should be called "mother." We did not enjoy these assignments, although they were, of course, educational. In later years I met anthropologists who were more interested in kinship systems than in anything else and for whom this field was an absorbing chess game. I doubt that Ruth Benedict had the same sort of enthusiasm for this specialty; she was not interested in intellectual puzzles for their own sake but saw kinship as part of the basic data we had to acquire.

Kinship, however, was not the only subject that Professor Benedict explored in her course, and in the long run I did, after all, get some of the sense of integration I sought. Not only did she relate social organization to other aspects of life, but she connected the study of primitive societies with the modern world. This was because part of the course was based on Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society.* Durkheim had argued that as division of labor has increased in the course of sociocultural evolution, there has been a concomitant increase of social solidarity that binds together the interdependent units of the social order. The "mechanical" solidarity found in more primitive, undifferentiated societies tends to suppress individuality, while the "organic" solidarity of more complex societies, marked by division of labor, facilitates it. Law was Durkheim's index of solidarity. He claimed that primitive societies are governed by repressive law which keeps people in line through punishment, while in complex societies there is more emphasis on restitutive law, which seeks to restore order rather than to penalize its violators.

Ruth Benedict admired Durkheim's work but criticized him for overemphasizing law and ignoring other forms of social control. She was more aware than Durkheim had been of the great variation in primitive societies. She provided a rough typology, and spoke of atomistic societies, corporate societies, and hierarchical societies. The first of these groupings included the simplest hunting-gathering societies with the least social and political integration. As ex-

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amples Ruth Benedict cited the Eskimo and White Knife Shoshone, peoples who live in small bands with only a sexual division of labor and almost no political leadership.

Most primitive societies, according to Ruth Benedict, are corporate societies, which have more social cohesion than do atomistic ones. Corporate societies are often organized on a segmentary basis. Each unit in such a system has the same constituents as the others, such as a chief, a shaman, patrilineal kin, and so forth. When such homologous units are in interaction, there is a danger of conflict between them, but they may be bound together by periodic rituals such as the Sun Dance of Plains Indian societies. Benedict saw present world states as existing in a comparable segmentary system. Each homologous unit has the same institutions—a central government, its own legal machinery, monetary system, and so forth—but the relations between the units are anarchic.

In hierarchical societies, as in the caste system of India, there may be organic solidarity in Durkheim's sense, for there is a division of labor which allows the society to capitalize on unlikenesses, whereas social responsibilities are often tied to higher status.

Although I was stimulated by all this, I found Professor Benedict's course very confusing; there was so much that was new to me. And while Ruth Benedict was an impressive teacher, she was not a particularly good lecturer. She spoke hesitantly and uncertainly; there was no drama in her lectures. But she was fascinating to watch because of the beauty of her face, with her reflective, dreamy-looking eyes. She was gray haired, tall, and thin. Her hands were surprisingly large and rough skinned, perhaps a heritage from her early years of poverty on a farm in upstate New York. When I became her student, Ruth Benedict was in her mid-fifties. She was famous, having published *Patterns of Culture* seven years before, but although she had great dignity, she had not altogether overcome the shyness of her earlier years.

Judging from the autobiographical sketch and journal selections which Margaret Mead published after her death, Ruth Benedict (née Fulton) had a most unhappy childhood and adolescence. She frequently gave way to violent temper tantrums and bilious attacks throughout childhood, and these were succeeded in later years by fits of depression. Despair, stoicism, and ambition are expressed in many passages of her journal. The ambition was first directed toward poetry and literature, and she planned to write a series of biographies of gifted, restless women—Mary Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller, Olive Schreiner—a project never completed. Between 1911 and 1914 Ruth Fulton taught at girls' schools in California; in 1914 she married Stanley Benedict, a biochemist. It is said that she longed to have a child and was crushed to learn that she could not have one. After this discovery, at the age of thirty-two, she turned her energies to anthropology and began to study with Franz Boas, whose trusted colleague she later became.

Professor Benedict's reverence for Boas was evident to her students, for she often referred to him in her lectures and required us to read his rather dry theoretical articles. He had stopped teaching at Columbia a few years before I arrived, but he could often be seen in the corridors of the anthropology department, where he came to have tea with Ruth Benedict and other disciples. Seeing his scarred, ancient face made me feel that I was close to the historical roots of anthropology.

Another historical old-timer was Bronislaw Malinowski, who once came to address the anthropology faculty and graduate students at Columbia. Although he was a great man, he was a nervous chain-smoker, who made some poor jokes on this occasion and kept referring in his lecture to Linton and Benedict as Ralph and Ruth, as if he were trying to be very American. As he talked, he abruptly turned to me (I was sitting in the front row) and asked, "What was Bob's last name?" Somehow, I guessed whom he had in mind. "Do you mean Robert Lowie?" "That's right. Bob Lowie."

Lowie and Alfred Louis Kroeber also appeared occasionally at Columbia. So those of us who were graduate students were able to feel some continuity with these pioneers. We knew that anthropology was a young field and that Boas had taught the first generation of professional anthropologists in the United States. We would be part of the next generation.

This was a time when the Columbia anthropology department gave emphasis to the field of culture-and-personality, or what is now called psychological anthropology, dealing

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with the relations between the personalities of individuals and their cultures. Franz Boas had given such investigations his blessing, having advised Margaret Mead on her choice of problem for her fieldwork in Samoa, while Ruth Benedict drew upon Boas's voluminous Kwakiutl data in describing Northwest Coast culture in *Patterns of Culture.* Boas wrote an introduction to that book and a foreword to Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928).

In *Patterns of Culture* Benedict proposed to view cultures as wholes and expressed a philosophy of cultural relativism. For her each culture was a special case, a unique configuration characterized by a particular set of values and a world view, although some cultures were held to be more integrated than others. Some have claimed that this relativistic approach is at odds with the analysis of cross-cultural regularities, since it does violence to institutions to take them out of context for comparative purposes. Characterizing Ruth Benedict's views in this way, on the basis of her published work, may be correct enough, but she never remained static. Her whole course on social organization involved cross-cultural comparisons, and, as I shall show later, her emphasis on these brought about a major change in the organization of my Ph.D. dissertation. I once talked about Benedict with Jules Henry, who had been her student at Columbia a few years before my time. He was pleasantly surprised to learn that she had discussed Durkheim's *Division of Labor in Society,* for she had never dealt with it when he was there.

Another new development was Ruth Benedict's concept of social synergy, put forth in the same course and also in a course on Primitive Religion. Social synergy refers to the combined effects of social institutions within a society, when they reinforce one another and lead to greater social cohesion and to the release of a greater than purely arithmetical sum of energy. Benedict argued that atomistic societies are low in social synergy, while more corporate societies have high synergy. This concept of hers was presented only a few years after the publication of *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples,* edited by Margaret Mead. Ruth Benedict preferred to speak of high and low synergy rather than of cooperation versus competition, for competition may be valuable in stimulating high synergy. Ruth Benedict never published anything on this concept, but it illustrates her continually inquiring, speculative tendency.

I remember one bit of advice she gave her students in this course. She wanted us to read ethnographies with empathy, to project ourselves into the culture being described, and to imagine what that life must be like. I suppose we all do that to some extent, but normally we are too lazy when we read to make the extra effort that Ruth Benedict urged upon us.

Apart from Ruth Benedict's courses, the field of culture-and-personality was also represented at Columbia by the Linton-Kardiner seminar. Ralph Linton came to Columbia in 1937 after Boas's retirement and became chairman of the anthropology department. He was said to get along badly with Ruth Benedict, but their interests were similar in many ways. Linton collaborated in the seminar with Abram Kardiner, a psychiatrist who had been analyzed by Freud and who coined the phrase "basic personality structure" to refer to the personality patterns shared by members of a particular society as the result of passing through a common gamut of childhood experiences. This Freudian emphasis on childhood distinguished the Linton-Kardiner school from Benedict's more culturological approach in *Patterns of Culture.* Another new characteristic, in keeping with the clinical background of Kardiner's training, was the use of the Rorschach test and other projective techniques in fieldwork. (The Rorschach test involves showing subjects ten semi-structured inkblots in a particular sequence; the subject tells what he or she sees in the blots.)

The usual practice in the Linton-Kardiner seminar was for an anthropologist who had recently returned from the field to give an ethnographic account of the community where he or she had worked, including the presentation of life history materials. After brooding over this information, Kardiner would present an analysis from a modified Freudian viewpoint, particularly noting relationships between the society's institutions and the basic personality structure. If there were recurrent personality patterns among the members of the society, there should be some evidence of such patterns in the Rorschach protocols, which would supplement the impressions of the field-worker and

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the deductions of the psychiatrist who analyzed the life history material. Then, if these different kinds of evidence appeared to converge, as in Cora Du Bois's study of Alor, that would greatly strengthen the validity of the conclusions reached.

Since I was enthusiastic about this approach, I was happy to learn in 1944 that the Columbia anthropology department planned to send me to northern Wisconsin for a summer's fieldwork on Chippewa (or Ojibwa) Indian reservations. One session of the Linton-Kardiner seminar had already been devoted to the Chippewa, and Ernestine Friedl had presented the ethnographic picture, including information about child-rearing practices. However, Kardiner felt unable to come up with his usual analytic synthesis, since he thought there was not enough life history material to draw upon. My assignment, then, was to collect some Chippewa autobiographies and more Rorschach protocols to add to those already acquired. Before going to Wisconsin in the summer of 1944, I accordingly took lessons in Rorschach administration. Ruth Benedict was assigned to be the chairman of my thesis committee.

Although she supported my efforts in other respects, Benedict did not approve of my giving the Rorschach test. When I mentioned studies which had made productive use of the Rorschach, she was not impressed. "They are not testing the *people*," she said severely. "They are testing the *test*." From her point of view, it was no doubt useful to test the test by giving it in different cultural contexts, but that would not lead to better understanding of the people involved—which could only come from soaking oneself in the culture, so to speak. However, I did give the test to Chippewa subjects in the summers of 1944 and 1946.

I still consider the Rorschach test to be a useful instrument, but I must admit that this has become a minority view. Ruth Benedict's adverse judgment has since prevailed. Many psychologists assert that the test lacks validity and reliability, and anthropologists have generally stopped using it in their fieldwork. One of the first anthropologists to use the test in a non-Western culture was Jules Henry, who collected Rorschach protocols in the native language from Pilagá Indians in South America in the late 1930s. But he was one of the first anthropologists, in a symposium in 1955, to claim that the test is a waste of time, echoing much later the view of his former teacher.

From 1944 to 1946 Ruth Benedict was on leave from Columbia. After my two summers of fieldwork I had a thesis committee which lacked my major professor. However, I began writing my dissertation, occasionally showing chapters to the two other committee members, who were encouraging enough. The model I chose for imitation was *The People of Alor* (1944) by Cora Du Bois, about half of which consisted of eight autobiographies. The rest contained an ethnographic description with emphasis on the life cycle and analyses of the biographies, Rorschachs, and children's drawings.

My dissertation about acculturation and personality among the Wisconsin Chippewa started off with about fifty pages of ethnohistoric data based on the reports of traders, missionaries, and Indian agents in northern Wisconsin before the modern period. Then there were an ethnographic account and four life histories, which made up my principal field data. Rorschach analyses were also included. All told, the manuscript ran to nearly six hundred typed pages. My two committee members seemed to think well of my efforts, but we had to await the return of Professor Benedict for a final assessment. I felt quite pleased with what I had done.

The meeting with my adviser, when it came, was therefore a shock. Ruth Benedict looked up from my manuscript and said gravely, "You have to write a *thesis*," emphasizing the word. "We all have to type up our notes when we come back from the field. You've done that. But now you have to write a *thesis*." She went on to say that my dissertation lacked a comparative focus. It dealt with the Chippewa Indians and how they had responded to acculturation and contact with the whites, but there was no information about how other American Indian groups had adjusted to contacts with whites and faced comparable situations. Hence one could not tell whether there was anything distinctive or diagnostic about the reactions of the Chippewa. Finally, Professor Benedict said to me, "Your manuscript is much too long; it should be only half its present length."

I was stunned. Later I was able to see that Ruth Benedict's advice to me was excellent, but at the time I was mainly aware of the fact that

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I had to begin all over again. In those days I had the use of a cubicle in the Columbia library. I began to work there, going through the literature about such Plains tribes as the Dakota and Cheyenne. From my reading I could see that the Cheyenne had responded quite differently to white contact than had the Chippewa. Chippewa social organization was atomistic, in Benedict's terms, in contrast to the much more cohesive, corporate social order of the Cheyenne. In summertime the large Cheyenne camp circle sometimes included as many as two or three thousand persons. There were a council of forty-four chiefs, soldier societies with policing functions, and collective activities like the buffalo hunt. In Benedict's terms, this was a society with high social synergy. The Chippewa social order, on the other hand, was more scattered and decentralized, and their acculturation proceeded in a more gradual, piecemeal fashion than that of the Plains tribes where the organic social order was disrupted by white contact and the decimation of the buffalo. In contrast to the situation on the Plains, I argued that there had been continuity in Chippewa personality patterns from the past to the present, for the atomistic social order had not changed very much on modern reservations.

I sometimes visited Professor Benedict's book-lined office to discuss these matters. On the walls were two framed photographs of stern old men with lined faces. One was her mentor, Franz Boas; the other was a Blackfoot Indian chief. She had spent the summer of 1939 with a group of graduate students doing fieldwork among the Blackfoot. This gave us some common ground, for I had come to know some Blackfoot Indians while attending the Winold Reiss Art School in Glacier Park, Montana, for three summers in the 1930s. Blackfoot Indians served as our models, and between poses I sometimes wrote down lists of Blackfoot words elicited from them. I also went to Sun Dances at Fort Browning and across the border in Canada.

"The Blackfoot always dance on a knife-edge," Ruth Benedict once said to me with a smile, as if we shared a common secret. It was a curious, vivid remark that remained in my mind. I didn't know exactly what she meant by it, and couldn't decide whether it was a profound insight or just an odd comment. Unfortunately, I lacked the courage or initiative to pin her down further. Another time she remarked seriously—indeed emphatically—"The Chippewa cannot kill the father!" She suggested that they could be contrasted with the Eskimos in that respect. In trying to understand cryptic remarks like these, I told myself that Ruth Benedict was a poetess as well as an anthropologist (between 1928 and 1930 she had published some poems under the name of Anne Singleton), and although she had the disciplined mind of a scientist, she sometimes spoke in the Delphic language of poetry.

When my revised dissertation (half the length of the original draft) was submitted to my adviser, she gave it her qualified approval. The comparisons of the Chippewa with the Plains tribes had strengthened it, and much unnecessary exposition had been deleted. My Ph.D. thesis was later published as Memoir 72 of the American Anthropological Association. I doubt that my first draft would ever have seen print.

It is clear that I owe much to Ruth Benedict. Later, in my book *Culture and Personality* (1963), I wrote in criticism of *Patterns of Culture*. Some might see this as disloyalty or impertinence on the part of a former student, although it was in keeping with the critical tradition of the Boas school. After I began to teach anthropology, I used to give lectures on the Pueblo Indians, including the Hopi and Zuni, drawing upon that marvelous document, *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian* (1942) and on the writings of people like Elsie Clews Parsons and Dorothy Eggan, who had worked in the Southwest. I found many discrepancies and contradictions in Ruth Benedict's account of the Pueblo Indians. She depicted the Hopi and Zuni as mild-mannered Apollonian people who prefer an orderly, predictable round of life, in contrast to other American Indians, who share a Dionysian set of values and seek unusual psychic states in vision quests, hallucinogenic drugs, and alcoholic intoxication. She claimed that Pueblo repugnance against liquor was so strong that drinking had never become a problem on their reservations. But there is much evidence of excessive drinking among them, especially around the time of the Shalako festival. Benedict stated that Pueblo Indians never whip their children, but contradictory testimony about that is found

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in Sun Chief's autobiography and elsewhere. To point out these discrepancies—and there are others—does not necessarily invalidate Ruth Benedict's generalizations about the integration of Pueblo culture, but it seemed clear to me that she had tried too hard to find evidence for a consistent world view underlying all aspects of Pueblo life. The same may be said of her description of Kwakiutl culture, which overemphasizes the violent, Dionysian tenor of Kwakiutl life.

More recently, I was brought back to Ruth Benedict's work, this time to her two-volume *Zuni Mythology* (1935), when I used the Zuni material for comparative purposes in my *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales and Their Relation to Chippewa Life* (1977). Contrasts between Chippewa and Zuni mythology are particularly interesting, since they involve contrasts between an atomistic social order and a corporate one, between a hunting-gathering and a horticultural people. Chippewa-origin myths recount the wanderings of a lone culture hero, Wenebojo, and his episodic encounters with different animals, while Zuni mythology concerns the movements of groups and migrations of clans, which are never mentioned in Chippewa narratives. In keeping with the Zunis' horticultural subsistence basis, their emergence myth tells how the first people made their way from below the earth up to the surface, aided by the sons of the Sun. It is characteristic of this settled farming people that particular localities—mountains, rivers, and villages—are often mentioned in their narratives, while Wisconsin Chippewa tales hardly ever mention specific places. Thus the Chippewa tales are expressive of a nomadic hunting-gathering way of life. Moreover, their casts of characters are small. Many of these stories are about two or three people living alone: a man and his nephew, a boy and his grandmother, a brother and sister. The Zuni dramatis personae is larger and more complex. The Zuni also have an abundance of courtship tales. In volume 1 of *Zuni Mythology* there are thirty such tales, which make up nearly 180 pages, and courtship themes also occur in eleven other stories. By contrast, there are very few courtship tales in the Chippewa collection. Moreover, there is a mildness in the Zuni narratives, as Benedict points out, with some exceptions in witch tales and stories of violent revenge. In general, the folklore does support Benedict's claim for the Apollonian character of the Zuni.

There are many kinds of relationship between a teacher and student. Ruth Benedict's response to Franz Boas was one of worshipful commitment. In a moving letter to him, toward the end of his life, she wrote: "... there has never been a time since I've known you that I have not thanked God all the time that you existed and that I knew you." More often, I think, a student's response to a teacher is marked by currents of resistance or rejection as well as by the willing acceptance of guidance. Even in Ruth Benedict's case, the kind of work she did turned out to be quite different from that of Boas. It may be agreeable for a student to have a teacher whose views are the same as his or her own, but in that case nothing fundamentally new can be learned. When their outlooks differ, it may be unpleasant for the student to reexamine things from an unfamiliar perspective. In such cases the relationship between teacher and student, like that between parent and child, is marked by ambivalence.

I was aware of some ambivalence in my feelings toward Ruth Benedict. I was awed by her knowledge and by her beauty and graciousness, but I was often puzzled by her lectures and mystified by her occasional cryptic remarks. To me she was an enigmatic person, not easy to assess. Yet her influence has been lasting. I have criticized some of her writing, but when I return to her work, I find that I still learn from it.

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Protest

D. M. Thomas

Just and truthful God,
I wish to protest;
there is so much we don't understand,
but you hurry away from our questions
like a politician from the cameras.

Why are the huge eyes of so many children,
too weak even to blink,
opened to your world,
only to become glazed pools
where flies swarm?

Why do you give, to the murderer
of the just ruler, a steady hand,
good luck, fanatical accomplices;
but to the executioner of the tyrant
a clumsy hand, bad luck,
weak and treacherous followers?

Here, an old woman, lonely, wanting death,
pulled alive from the smoking ruins;
there, the young mother of children,
blown to pieces.

Why, out of five of equal aspiration,
do you make one a Mozart, another a Hitler,
another a Campuchian peasant,
another a rich woman's aborted fetus,
another swept away with millions
in the vaginal fluid?

One a man, another a stoat, another a flower,
another a stone, another—not even a stone?

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Any fisherman
who used a net with such wide holes
would leave his family starved.

God, do you ever shudder
with the thought of your nonexistence,
as we do with the thought of ours?
With the thought of *why?* Why *you?*
I might have been you,
and you might have been here.

Are you a slave to the dice?

I have a humble place at your table,
but how can I eat your bread,
and drink your wine,
when there are the poor, outside your palace,
stretching their skinny arms through the railings?

Do you envy us our courage, patient endurance,
passion for the unattainable:
qualities you cannot possess?

You are like a quizmaster,
who hasn't himself been given the answers.
You wrap your cloak about you,
your cloak of night and stars.

—After a medieval Armenian poem by Frik

D. M. THOMAS is a British poet whose most recent collection is *The Honeymoon Voyage.*

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Interval

CAROLYN ROSS

A small life escapes
through the holes in its breathing, measures
in a systematic dying, and at last
the mother takes interest,

sniffs it: her single kitten, a peculiar color,
white—or off-white; unlucky,
solitary as an omen.
It spends its last calorie

to register complaint: life
is just too hard.
And as the force-fed cow's milk comes
bubbling back from the lungs, I think:

it's such a cheap shot, leaves
fluttering from a cinematic calendar.
Now the mother yowls, horrified,
tugs at the head, wants it back

whole. This elaborate interval,
a seventy-two-hour bit of chance
existence sandwiched between eternities
has produced this

tiny body curling like ash; one wrinkled and still
embryonic, eyes clenched, its mouth
slightly opened and full of leftover noise;
a grave we dig with a spoon.

CAROLYN ROSS teaches at Wagner College in Staten Island, New York. Her work appears regularly in literary magazines and journals.

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Only Yesterday

KENNETH S. LYNN

Frederick Lewis Allen was a journalist by profession, a political liberal by conviction, a Puritan by inheritance. In a time of national crisis, these varied elements of personal outlook fused into a view of history, and a remarkable book was born. It is now almost fifty years since *Only Yesterday* bestrode the best-seller lists of 1931, but Allen's portrayal of the 1920s as the age of jazz babies, speakeasies, sports worship, sex crimes, xenophobic politics, and governmental graft continues to dominate our sense of the period, as well as to lend credibility to the increasingly fashionable notion that the story of twentieth-century America divides neatly into decades, each with a character peculiarly its own.

To Allen's Calvinist forebears, several of whom arrived in New England aboard the *Mayflower*, crop failures and other setbacks to settlement were not cosmic accidents, but deliberate punishments meted out by a God made angry by lapses from rectitude among his people. In the wake of such chastisements, penitent believers sought to discover how they had fallen into error through sober reflections on their recent behavior. Although later generations of Allens turned away from Calvinism as a creed, its obsession with self-scrutiny and sin stayed with them. Thus in 1878, the Reverend Frederick Baylies Allen was so alarmed by what he regarded as the moral disorder of modern Boston that he devised a system for ridding the city of sexually explicit books and other iniquities. Calling together a group of reform-minded citizens, he persuaded them to join him in founding the New England Watch and Ward Society. Until his death in 1925, the Reverend Allen was the organization's most zealous member. Four years later, his son and namesake demonstrated that he, too, in his way, was a child of Puritanism. Frederick Lewis Allen's virtually automatic reaction to the Great Crash of the New York stock market was to begin reflecting on all the changes in American behavior that had occurred since the end of the war with Germany.

By the winter of 1930, a book on the twenties was already taking shape in his mind. The people of the period had not known that the future held catastrophe in store for them, but Allen nevertheless intended to judge them in the light of it. Just as some of his bibulous friends in journalism were wont to measure the degree of their self-indulgence the night before by the size of their hangovers on the morning after, so Allen concluded—on the basis of America's fragile condition after the Crash—that the twenties must have been a ten-year-long bout of riotous excess and wanton irresponsibility. That present suffering implied prior guilt was one of Allen's cardinal assumptions as he set out to recapture the past.

Only a few years earlier, his opinion of American life in the twenties had been much more benign. In 1927, for instance, he had published a pair of magazine articles in which he attacked H. L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis for their "fantastic picture" of the contemporary scene. These "highbrows" would have us believe, Allen had written, that their fellow Americans are "vulgar, depraved, and uncivilized," whereas an impartial examination would almost certainly reveal that the average citizen is "rather a good fellow, after all." The author of *Only Yesterday*, however, wished to forget those words. Denunciations of American depravity and vulgarity seemed to him to be quite justified,

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and in the chapter entitled "The Revolt of the Highbrows" he summarized the jeremiads of Mencken and Lewis with unreserved respect.

The Puritan moral presuppositions that Allen brought to the task of writing history were reinforced by the political prejudices of a liberal Democrat. In the course of the twenties, Allen had not voted for any of the Republican candidates for the presidency, and the onset of the Depression did nothing to improve his opinion of the GOP.

To Calvin Coolidge, in consequence, *Only Yesterday* vouchsafes a mere half-dozen pages, all of them scornful. "Neither he nor his intellect had ever ventured far abroad," runs a typical sentence, even though Coolidge's ownership of Latin, Greek, French, German, and Italian lexicons and grammars was only one of many signs of this Amherst graduate's wide-ranging curiosity. To Herbert Hoover the book gives even shorter shrift. From its brief and contemptuous account of his administration one comes away with the impression that Hoover drew most of his ideas about crisis management from Dr. Coué's *Self-Mastery Through Conscious Autosuggestion.* Only to Warren G. Harding was Allen generous—in terms of space—lavishing an entire chapter, thirty-six pages, on his life and times. All to the purpose, however, of savaging Harding's presidency and of clinching the author's case that the twenties were an era of national decay. Robert K. Murray, in his excellent study *The Harding Era* (1969), accuses Allen of misleading "tens of thousands of young readers whose total exposure to the twenties [has come] through the pages of his *Only Yesterday*," and Murray's ensuing analysis of Allen's mythmaking is devastating.

Among other canards, *Only Yesterday* would have us believe that Harding's ambitious wife had "tailored and groomed him into outward respectability"; that from the beginning of his career in politics he had served as "the majestic Doric false front" behind which a definable group of lobbyists, fixers, and purchasers of privilege called the Ohio Gang put over its "little deals"; that party bosses decided to nominate Harding for the presidency well in advance of the 1920 Republican convention and later sealed their bargain in a smoke-filled hotel room; that during the Harding years the nation's capital was infested with "blowsy gentlemen with cigars stuck in their cheeks and rolls of very useful hundred-dollar bills in their pockets"; that Charles Evans Hughes and Herbert Hoover were appointed to the Cabinet merely as window dressing; that Harding gave away offices "like a benevolent Santa Claus"; that he had an inferior intellect which could not cope with the intricate problems that came across his desk; that he was more interested in affairs of the heart than in affairs of state; and that his death may very well have been suicide.

Distortions of this magnitude suggest malice, except that Allen was not a malicious man. While his inaccurate statements about Harding bespoke a left-of-center willingness to believe the worst about conservative Republicans, they were also grounded in what he was convinced was the reliable testimony of contemporary newspapers and magazines. If he devoted fewer than four pages of *Only Yesterday* to the positive accomplishments of the dead President and approximately twenty pages to the scandalous conduct of a few of his friends and acquaintances, it was because a hundred headlines about Teapot Dome had fixed an image of overwhelming corruption in his mind. If he spoke unfairly about Harding's intelligence, or made dark reference to a supposedly conspiratorial organization called the Ohio Gang, it was because the distinguished journalists William Allen White and Bruce Bliven had previously done so. Allen's misreadings of the twenties—of its social history no less than its political history—are ultimately traceable to an inadequately critical attitude toward the gargoyle journalism of the era.

Throughout the twenties Allen was himself a journalist. After a brief stint as a press-bureau propagandist during World War I, he went to work for Harvard University as its first director of publicity. New York, however, was where he wanted to be, and when he was offered a job on *Harper's* magazine, he took it. These experiences prepared him to write *Only Yesterday* by teaching him what the general reader wanted. All of the book's most engaging qualities—its breezy, informal prose style, its attention to the worship of Jack Dempsey and other popular heroes whom more orthodox historians refused to take seriously, above all its deft re-creation of

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various routines of daily life such as the rather alarming problem of starting up a Model T Ford—are journalistic in the best sense of the word. So, too, is the book's clever orchestration of song titles, advertising slogans, and the names of movie stars as a means of recapturing a bygone mood. For while Allen sat in judgment on the hedonism of the twenties, he also felt a nostalgia for its vanished pleasures. His wife, Dorothy, to whom he was very close, died while he was working on the book, and the completed volume is dedicated to her memory in more ways than one.

Yet if Allen's involvement in journalism helped to make him an imaginative historian, it also robbed him of a detachment toward the materials on which he most heavily depended. Too close to the trees to see very much of the woods, he never quite grasped the fact that the newspapers and magazines of the twenties illustrated developments in journalism with far greater fidelity than they mirrored events in the world. Thus in *Only Yesterday*'s most famous chapter, "The Revolution in Manners and Morals"—which has absolutely enthralled academic historians of our own time who ought to know better (see, for instance, the chapter called "The Revolution in Morals" in William E. Leuchtenburg's *The Perils of Prosperity*)—Allen insists that the Jazz Age overthrew traditional standards of American morality and that "one of the most striking results of the revolution was a widely pervasive obsession with sex." The most tangible piece of evidence he offers in substantiation of this claim is the vast amount of space that newspapers of the period gave to juicy scandals like the Hall-Mills murder case, the Snyder-Gray murder case, and the exigent demands imposed by the aging Daddy Browning upon his nubile Peaches. Having satisfied himself that the twenties had indeed gone crazy about sex, Allen ascribed the phenomenon to the following factors: the eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-we-die spirit with which "a whole generation" of young men had been infected by the war with Germany; the effect that flaming youth's example had upon middle-aged Americans—"they saw their juniors exploring the approaches to the forbidden land of sex, and presently they began to play with the idea of doing a little experimenting of their own"; the spread of the Freudian vision of the sex drive as "the central and pervasive force which moved mankind"; the sharp increase in the use of the automobile and its speedy transformation into a "house of prostitution on wheels"; and the movies' incessant emphasis on suggestive themes, as evidenced by the film advertisement which promised patrons "brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific climax that makes you gasp."

In a gesture that was reminiscent of his father's investigative techniques, Allen made no effort to determine whether the film in question actually resembled the hype for it. Nowhere in his argument, indeed, did he pause to consider the possibility that he had grossly exaggerated the dimensions of the moral breakdown he was seeking to explain, and that the "obsessive" newspaper coverage of certain scandals was symptomatic of a journalistic revolution, not a sexual revolution.

Hard information on what did or did not happen in the back seats of automobiles parked on dark streets half a century ago is, to be sure, not easily come by, but it would appear from the evidence of American literature that the changes in the sexual conduct of American men and women between, say, 1905 and 1925 were far less significant than the continuities. F. Scott Fitzgerald, of course, kicked off the twenties with the rather breathless announcement in *This Side of Paradise* that "Victorian mothers" had no idea "how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed," and *Only Yesterday* repeats that line. But Fitzgerald mainly had in mind the rather special daughters whom he had encountered at sophisticated parties in St. Paul, Chicago, and New York—and most of all he was thinking about a psychologically complicated girl from the "silk-hat district" of Montgomery, Alabama. His fellow Princetonian Booth Tarkington, on the other hand, set down in the fiction he published in the twenties a much more encompassing account of American society than *This Side of Paradise* offers, and there is no question that the young women he depicted would have been shocked by Zelda Sayre. The middle-class heroine of *Alice Adams*, for instance, equates sexual looseness with self-

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destruction, just as her mother does. *Only Yesterday*, however, overlooks *Alice Adams*, even though it is literarily of greater interest than *This Side of Paradise* and was far more popular with readers of the period.

On the question of whether postwar American males were given more to extramarital sexual adventures than their prewar counterparts, Allen once again skirted the best literary evidence by failing to point out that whereas George F. Babbitt's best friend sometimes cheated on his wife, so did the businessmen whom Dreiser had written about ten or twenty years earlier; and that Hemingway's Nick Adams not only lost his virginity well before a wartime spirit of eat, drink, and be merry allegedly infected the sex habits of America's young men, but had not required an automobile to help him accomplish the feat. As for Babbitt himself, that quintessential man of the twenties drew back from the temptation of sexual dalliance, but *Only Yesterday* does not note this either.

Allen also managed to write a journalistically inspired history of the twenties without paying much attention to the premier newspapermen of the period. If he had, he might never have written "The Revolution in Manners and Morals," for the careers of such men as Captain Patterson of the *New York Daily News* and Kent Cooper of the Associated Press conceivably could have taught him what the sensational newspaper stories on which his chapter relied really meant. Cooper's career in particular would have been instructive, because Cooper did more than any other single individual in the twenties to alter the content of the nation's newspapers. From the early years of the century, he had worked for the AP as a reporter and editor, but not until he became general manager in 1925 was he able to transform the nature of the news that the service sent out on its wire. Once in control, he immediately enlarged the scope of the AP's coverage to include information, pictures, and news features of wide human appeal that were of interest to "everybody," as he grandly says in his autobiography. Some of that human-interest news had to do with the theories of Einstein and Michelson and other scientific marvels, but a larger share was devoted to manners and morals. If readers across the nation in the latter half of the twenties were more conscious of their countrymen's conduct than ever before, this was at least in part because of the executive orders of Kent Cooper.

Behind Cooper's decision to enlarge the AP's definition of the news lay the same consideration which had already prompted many individual publications to broaden their coverage of events; there were yawning holes to fill in the postwar American newspaper. From the moment the war with Germany ended, the size of newspapers had begun to increase. Spurred on by the demands of advertisers for more and more space, they steadily upped the number of pages per issue. The *New York Times* is a case in point. At the end of the war, the *Times* generally printed twenty-four pages daily. By 1921, issues of thirty-two, thirty-six, or even forty pages were the weekday rule, while the Sunday edition was more appropriately measured in pounds. An advertising linage that was ten times what it had been in the 1890s took up a good many of these extra pages, but not all of them. Into the emptiness of its newly created news columns, the *Times* poured sports stories, crime stories, and sex stories in revolutionary quantities. During the three weeks of the Hall-Mills trial, the *Times* saw fit to print more than half a million words about the case (as compared to the *New York Daily News*'s quarter of a million words). For the first Dempsey-Tunney fight in 1926, as Silas Bent has pointed out in an interesting book called *Ballyhoo*, the paper used the same size banner headline with which it had announced the Armistice.

Readers also pressured the publishers to put out thicker newspapers. As early as 1911, the journalist Will Irwin had described twentieth-century America's increasing demand for news as "a crying primal want of the mind, like hunger of the body." The sensational events of the war in Europe accelerated the growth of that demand, and as the newspapers feverishly expanded their staffs and stepped up the tempo of their reporting, the demand perversely became more insistent. A condition of something like insatiability had been achieved, in which the hunger for news was further inflamed by every improvement in the delivery of it or expansion in the supply. While this development was certainly astonishing, more astonishing still was the craving that Americans in

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the twenties began to display for frequent repetitions of the very same items of news. Thus radio coverage of sports events did not at all threaten the popularity of the newly expanded sports sections of newspapers, as some publishers had feared it would. Instead, the vocal accounts by Graham McNamee and other broadcasters inspired listeners to buy more newspapers, morning and evening, than ever before. Between 1919 and 1929, the purchasers of daily newspapers in the United States increased from 33 million to 42 million, even though newsreels and radio broadcasts were simultaneously becoming familiar elements of the cultural scene. That familiarity with the news did not diminish the nation's eagerness to take it in was also attested by the success of *Time* magazine, which in its early years was nothing much more than a rehash of the newspapers to which its two young editors subscribed. In the 1920s, enlarged versions of the news drummed on the national consciousness in a rapidly intensifying tattoo. Not surprisingly, some Americans occasionally confused the panoramas of the media with the panorama of reality. One of them was the author of *Only Yesterday*.

The great press lords of the twenties—Joseph Medill Patterson, who launched the tabloid *Daily News* in 1919 and built the biggest newspaper circulation in New York in less than twenty-four months, the imperious Robert Rutherford McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune*, Roy Howard of the Scripps-Howard chain, Adolph Ochs of the *New York Times*, the aging but still active William Randolph Hearst—were all fascinated by mass living and eager to understand and use it. Yet with the exception of Hearst, none of these powerful men acquired the kind of celebrity that attached to certain reporters, editors, and magazine writers of the period. As the authors of *The Front Page* (1928) knew, the glamour of American journalism was to be found in the newsroom, not the boardroom. Whenever the columnist Heywood Broun walked into a Greenwich Village restaurant or hailed a taxi outside Madison Square Garden, witnesses to the event stirred with recognition of his burly figure. In the opinion of many Americans, the nation's most exciting writers were neither novelists nor poets, but sports reporters like Grantland Rice. The political gibes of William Allen White and H. L. Mencken were not merely reactions to the news, they *were* news. Commanding an attention unprecedented in the history of their profession, the famous journalists of the twenties imposed personal interpretations of events upon the minds of millions.

Of all the influential newsmen of the decade, the one destined to exert the profoundest influence upon subsequent historians was Frederick Lewis Allen's great friend, Walter Lippmann of the *New York World* and the magazine *Vanity Fair*. In *Only Yesterday*, in Leuchtenburg's *The Perils of Prosperity*, in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Crisis of the Old Order*, in Samuel Lubell's *The Future of American Politics*, in dozens of biographies and other sorts of books which have contributed to our collective consciousness of the twenties in America, Lippmann's journalistic observations are at work. His essays covered a wide range of subjects, but in his most ambitious pieces he developed a general theory of contemporary American society. To Lippmann the nation was really two nations. On one side of the fault line was the "old" America of small towns and farms, peopled by Protestants of native stock and dedicated to defending America's traditional values and beliefs. On the other side was the "new" America of the cities, alive with immigrants and enlightened by intellectuals. The "old" America had embraced the Prohibition movement and the anti-Catholic Ku Klux Klan; the "new" had taken Governor Al Smith to its bosom. These allegiances could be only partially explained in terms of religious affiliation or of contrasting attitudes toward drink; on their profoundest level of meaning, they were symbols of cultural difference. "The Governor's more hasty friends show an intolerance when they believe Al Smith is the victim of purely religious prejudice," Lippmann insisted. "Quite apart from the severe opposition of the prohibitionists, the objection to Tammany, the sectional objection to New York, there is an opposition to Smith which is as authentic, and, it seems to me, as poignant as his support. It is inspired by the feeling that the clamorous life of the city should not be acknowledged as the American ideal."

Of the many historians who ultimately made this argument their own, none took into

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account the newspaper and magazine contexts in which it appeared. As a result, none of them understood that, in its own pontifical way, Lippmann's analysis of the city-country split in American society was no less characteristic an example of the gargoyle journalism of the twenties than was Grantland Rice's likening of the Notre Dame backfield to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, or Bruce Bliven's sensational descriptions of the Ohio Gang, or the oft-repeated comparison of Bartolomeo Vanzetti to Jesus Christ (even though Vanzetti was armed at the time of his arrest), or the assertion of the entire nation's press that Lindbergh's flight to Paris in 1927 (to which it collectively gave 27,000 columns of newsprint in the first four days) was "the greatest feat of a solitary man in the records of the human race," as the *New York World* put it. Although Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) contains a justly famous discussion of journalistic stereotypes, his understanding of them did not mean that he was always able to erase their imprint from his mind. Lippmann was a city boy, born and bred, and his exclusive association of Prohibition and the Klan with rural America was the product of long exposure to the anti-provincial stereotypes of the New York press. In fact, Prohibition engaged the energies of Progressive reformers on Manhattan Island as well as of religious fundamentalists in Manhattan, Kansas, while the recrudescent Klan burned crosses in Chicago and Indianapolis neighborhoods no less often than in the countryside that lay between them. Even the Hoover-Smith presidential campaign of 1928 did not vindicate Lippmann's analysis. For as the historian Allan J. Lichtman has decisively demonstrated in a recent book, *Prejudice and the Old Politics: The Presidential Election of 1928*, only one variable counted in that election: religion. Catholics shifted into the Smith camp and Protestants shifted into the Hoover camp no matter whether they lived in the old America or the new.

Lippmann's view of America in the twenties as two cultures divided along demographic lines tells us more about his own prejudices than about his countrymen's. Moreover, he ignored the emergence of the suburbs. Were new communities like Shaker Heights culturally a part of the city or of the countryside? Lippmann's categories simply had no room in them for the suburban phenomenon. Instead of thinking about America in the twenties as a complex entity, Lippmann projected a desperate struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, in which the forces of darkness were prevailing—for had not the retrogressive countryside been successful in keeping the clamorous life of the cities from being acknowledged as the American ideal? This analysis was miserably misconceived, yet it lives today in the work of New Deal–oriented historians who have a political stake in the idea that the twenties was a shameful time. For all its ideological appeal, however, Lippmann's commentary might not have been so readily accepted by later writers if it had not been for his friend Allen's intervening portrait of the decade. *Only Yesterday* made it easy to believe in the decadence of the twenties.

Only Yesterday also launched the myth of the moral health of the thirties. Interested as always in sexual matters, Allen spoke in his closing pages of the long skirts and draperies and white gloves of 1930 and 1931 as "the outward signs of a subtle change in the relations between the sexes." The revolution in manners and morals, he announced with puritanical triumph, "had at last reached an armistice." Instead of being laughed out of court, this totally unsubstantiated argument was taken up and elaborated upon by hundreds of commentators on the American scene. Soon it became a commonplace for them to say that although Depression-era America had a terrible hangover, at least the nation was sober once again. As Malcolm Cowley put it in *Exile's Return*, in a chapter entitled "New Year's Eve," the twenties had been "an easy, quick, adventurous age, good to be young in; and yet on coming out of it one felt a sense of relief, as on coming out of a room too full of talk and people into the sunlight of winter streets." Neither Cowley nor any other devotee of this sort of analysis has ever stopped to consider that Prohibition was in force in the twenties and that Repeal occurred in the thirties. For the writers who believe that America's moral character suffered a major change after the Crash are more interested in pursuing alcoholic metaphors than in thinking about alcoholic facts.

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MEMOIR

Album of London, 1951

STANLEY KAUFFMANN

I

London in June 1951 seemed sacred. I had never been there before, had never been in Europe before, and I arrived with two lights in me. One was the thought of going to the source of all English. The other was the thought of seeing the country that had undergone the Blitz, had suffered so much to help win the Hitler war. I had not been in the war: for physical reasons I had been deferred and had done some small volunteer things at home. London was the first place I set foot where the war had actually been. Shakespeare, Dickens, and V-bombs. Laura said, as we got off the plane, that I looked tense.

In those days the Atlantic flight was different. After New York there was a fueling stop in Newfoundland. That stop made the flight feel more of an accomplishment—a running start, a pause to gather up, then a leap. We had chosen to go by the British line, and their plane was like a big boat. We had berths, which were let down like those in Pullman cars, but they were jokes. When your ear touched the pillow, you got the sound of the motors—props, not jets—louder than otherwise.

I wouldn't have slept much, anyway. When, in earliest light, I saw the first rocks off the west coast of Ireland, I felt as if I had put them there, like an architect who sees his plans in proof. Ireland, England, Europe were being made to my specifications as we approached. Everything was what I expected, and was surprising too.

At the London airport we were met by Reggie Hand, his wife, and their small son. I had come to London on business for Eagle Books, the New York publishing house where I was an editor, and Reggie was the head of the British subsidiary, Allied, that Eagle had lately founded. Reggie was smiles, sparkling rimless eyeglasses, lean cheeks, and vigor. Margaret, his wife, was a younger version of the queen, solid and sedate and dewy. Their boy Colin, about four, in knee pants and blazer, was curious about us for a moment, then tagged along at his mother's hand, curious elsewhere.

We all had a cup of tea at the airport—the Hands weren't coming to our hotel with us because they lived in Slough, in the other direction—and I tried to act as if I were still on earth. But the cheap table and chairs, the seedy waiter, the pallid tea, the crumbly toast all seemed to me unearthly, summoned from somewhere to sustain an illusion. The Hands asked about our flight, Reggie told me that a desk had been put aside for me at the office, that his colleagues were eager to meet me next morning, that appointments had been made as I had suggested, and I kept wanting to ask: "Did you see air raids? Did you hear bombs? How does it feel to be English? To live among these old names?"

Colin played around the table like a locomotive. When Margaret offered him a bit of toast, he said, "Foo-ee poo-ee," and puffed on. Margaret smiled. "Can't say I blame him. It's poor stuff, this. Not proper toast, over coals. I don't suppose you have coal fires in the States?"

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Not in New York anyway, said Laura.

"I know," said Margaret, "I've seen it on the films. You have central heating. I'm sure it's lovely, but I don't think I could ever be quite easy without a coal fire."

I couldn't believe I was talking to a contemporary. I couldn't believe, yet, that I was in a place where someone could say that.

Reggie arranged for a porter to handle our bags; then they walked us out to a taxi. We passed a huge W. H. Smith news kiosk and bookstall. In the book section, prominently shown, were some copies of a novel of mine that had recently been published in Britain. It was astonishing. I had already seen copies in New York, it was the third book of mine to be published here, still I couldn't quite realize that a whole country was entailed in those different-looking books I had received. It was mystical to find myself there.

Laura saw the book and exclaimed.

Reggie smiled and flushed and said, "Yes, we saw it on the way in. Splendid, isn't it? I'd awfully like to take credit for laying it all on, but it was W. H. Smith's idea."

Margaret said, "Isn't it smashing? It's perfectly smashing."

"It *is* nice," I said, wanting to shout.

We were glad that the Hands didn't ride into London with us; it gave us the chance to be quiet if we chose. It gave me the chance to marvel at the taxi itself—the high old car like a top hat on wheels, the sliding door next to the driver as the only way in, the driver himself in a double-breasted suit and necktie and curled-brim felt hat. I knew I was being naive, and I didn't want to waste a moment of it.

The city itself made my eyes moist and my throat dry. It looked so grimy. The buildings looked so low. It all seemed so tired and wide and great. There were still large gaps, still piles of broken stone and brick. To me it was consecrated ground, especially because of the pathetic shop windows, the halfhearted billboards, the people busily threading their lives in and out through the streets, the kids playing just as if it were an ordinary place.

I began to recognize names on street signs. Hammersmith!

Our hotel was the Rembrandt, opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum. It was what I wanted it to be, frumpy and orderly, brown and dim. In the back of the lobby I saw a group of formally dressed people coming out of a banquet room, chuckling and murmuring. It was a wedding party. I learned later that the Rembrandt was a favorite place for friends' weddings. No one had been married there himself, but everyone had a friend who had been married there.

In the elevator, the lift, I told the operator our floor, and he said, "Ankyou, sir." It was the first time I heard it.

We went to the theater that night. I've forgotten the play, but I remember the prostitutes in the doorways of Brewer Street off Piccadilly Circus. They were the first I had ever seen in a street. In my span, one could grow up in New York without seeing streetwalkers. I began to feel traveled.

II

Next morning I came out of the hotel, crossed the street, and took a bus to work, feeling double, native and Martian. The Allied offices were in a small former embassy off Babbage Square near Wigmore Street. Not all of it had yet been leased since its diplomatic service. The ground floor was vacant; the large double doors were open on a beautiful parquet floor, a pile of rubble in the center, and a great marble fireplace beyond. I walked up the curved stone staircase to the door of Allied and went out of grandeur into plywood partitions.

Reggie Hand hardly gave me a chance to tell my name to the young woman at the front desk; he was out of his cubicle smiling, glasses glinting. He introduced me to the young but dignified Miss Dobbs, who was to help me as needed. Then I met Simon Verger, the one editor, a young man who was short but who managed to seem lanky, who seemed to present his shoulder bones in friendship. Then I met Bob Thorley, the sales manager, tall with a sandy mustache, who had a little limp. The war, I thought at once. Verger gave me reserved owlish warmth; Thorley spoke quietly, as if he and I were resuming cordially. I was one of the first to visit them from their New York owner's office, and I knew that this was at least part of the reason for the welcome, but I didn't care, I was glad of it. I was shown to a desk in a corner that

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was to be mine for my stay. There were some letters for me and a typewritten list of appointments.

Eagle and Allied were both paperbound firms, and the object of my trip was to find British books, hardcover, that had not been committed for paperbound reprinting, salable books that had escaped the eyes of previous American scouts, recently or not. If I found anything especially good, Eagle would then "plant" it with an American hardcover publisher as a prelude to reprinting it in America and, through Allied, in Britain. My job was tough. Eagle had chosen me for it, they said, because I had as good a chance as anyone of succeeding and because they wouldn't care if I didn't find anything: the trip would be useful—experience for me, attention for Allied.

For the next two weeks I bustled around the center of London in taxis, visiting publishers. That was the first part of the trip. Then Laura and I were to go off on a holiday, elsewhere in England and in France. Then would come Part Two of the business trip—another week in London when I would revisit the publishers I had seen. They would have had time to comb their lists, and I would have had time to read some of the books I had already been given.

Most of what I remember of London in 1951 had to do with offices or business lunches.

The head of a publishing house couldn't close the door of his office squarely. "Been like that ever since the buzz bombs," he said.

A literary agent, a woman, was lunching with me in a restaurant. She was busily discussing contracts. Behind us, a waiter dropped a glass. She went white. She stammered. Then she smiled quickly and said, "Sorry. Whenever I hear breaking glass. Sorry."

The same woman spoke about troubles with the mail from America during the war. "But there was something very strange. The only thing that always came through, or so it seemed, almost without fail, was *The New Yorker*. I never understood it. It was incredible. Nothing else would arrive for weeks, but *The New Yorker* was unfailing. Incredible."

The sorriest publisher I visited, a pompous little scrubber who dealt in eighth-rate novels and inspirational texts, had a Victorian office near Paddington Station. A frightened old serf in a knee-length gray office coat showed me up a steep flight of wooden stairs to a stuffy room where this wing-collared tyrant waited, beetle-browed. The serf bowed three times as he showed me in; the boss literally waved him out. Then in his wing collar and morning coat, the head of this house tried to sell me *Flames of Araby* and *Clean Chaps Are Happy Chaps*.

Another man, the middle-aged inheritor of a famed publishing name, received me in his private office, which had once been the drawing room of this town house where his firm was located. He wore a shabby Savile Row suit, a wrinkled white shirt, a soiled collar, a stained bow tie. His courtesy was kingly. I asked if his firm had been in these quarters for a long time. It was clearly a question that pleased him, especially from an American. He said that this was the room in which his great-great-grandfather had introduced Byron to Scott. He seemed to form his words out of a remote past; they came gently toward me down a long vista, taking fine porcelain shapes as they neared. We chatted. A tinkle sounded outside the double doors. "Ah," he said, "I hear the approach of tea." He turned to me with a roguish smile. "Of course, I know you Americans prefer Coco-colo."

And I saw another publisher in a former drawing room, a long rectangle. It was a dank June day; my marrow was chilled. This long room had a fireplace at the other end from the desk, and in it a small electric heater. I tried hard not to complain about the cold, but the boy on the bicycle met the tree. As I felt myself about to shiver, I asked whether that heater was on. "Yes," said the publisher, commiserating, "beastly hot, isn't it?" He got up and threw wide the window behind him.

Through those two weeks, doing business and being wide-eyed at the same time, I was busy from Paddington to Bloomsbury, scurrying by comfortable taxi, walking in the narrow streets and across the many squares, priding myself on how quickly I learned shortcuts and landmarks. I smoked an English pipe, carried a pocket box of wooden English matches, and drank a good deal more than I was used to, particularly beer at odd hours. I felt engaged in an initiation rite. The doing of business in this city was a secret blessing,

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a way to get inside on true pretenses. How proud I was that I didn't have time to visit the Tower or see the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. Laura, while I was busy, was being taken to Wimbledon tennis by my own English publisher, or to tea at the House of Commons, or to people's homes, close or distant, getting another London outside the tours. I, in a dream that I tried to keep hard-headed, was swimming through the crammed days, up and down wide stairs and narrow stairs or in lifts that were always tiny, in grand rooms and plyboard excuses, drinking and eating and drinking. For most of my life I had wanted to be here, but I had never imagined such a plunge.

What the photographs and films and books had not prepared me for were the smells and sounds. The smells I remember are of pubs, of English cigarettes, the London underground, London newsprint. The most significant sound, the sound that still brings all after it, was the English telephone. Double ring. Pause. Double ring. I had heard it in films, of course, but until it happened at my elbow, until I myself picked up a phone which rang that way, I didn't realize how it fit the country. Double the American ring, yet more casual.

Everything I saw and heard and smelled, no matter how remote or trifling, seemed connected to a musty heroism, a sense of uncomplaint, of people having come through an agony and not yet realizing that they were too spent to stand.

More than one man said of another man that he had "a good war record," something I had never heard in New York. Heads of firms wore unmatched suit jackets and trousers. Reggie Hand had only one suit. At theaters I saw airy women in faded dresses with cardigans over them. I had brought a box of cigars with me from New York, but I couldn't smoke them in public: people looked at me as if they knew I was smoking the price of a meal. The pipe I bought in Jermyn Street seemed average size to me, but Simon Verger, whose pipe had a bowl half the size, teased me. "That's an export pipe," he said. "None of us could afford to fill it." Several times when I had to leave a taxi in a hurry and couldn't figure the tip, I held out my hand with some change in it and asked the driver to take the tip. Always he liked the compliment and picked carefully. So many of the buildings were smoke-blackened, so many wooden hoardings were around bomb sites still being cleared, so many doors were use-darkened around the doorknobs, so many light switches were gray. The commissionaires at the theaters, the doormen, wore their war decorations on their theater uniforms. Brown Windsor soup became a name in my life on the official price-fixed menus that still prevailed in pubs and restaurants. I became fond of the smaller size English typing paper.

I got an image of London as huge, round, oaken, worn: a lovely old tub of a town.

III

But I got another London as well. The imagined city, imagined and at the same time true, the hero city that even in its diversity seemed bound by courtesies of shared travail, showed other sides. I was lucky, in the long run anyway, to see them, too.

We met an actress named Ursula Banks, who was playing a small part—which was all she ever played—in a successful comedy. She was a black-haired woman in her thirties, of great friendliness and voice and thirst and sexual appetite. The last was gossip, the rest apparent. Ursula had a small mews flat, little money, and less care. One of the ways she got drinks and men was to invite friends to give parties at her flat. They would provide the drink, and she would choose a man at the party whom she would ask, discreetly, to remain after the others had gone.

"Darling," she said on the phone one day, "this Sunday. Many publishing chaps. Five o'clock or so. You both must come."

I said we'd love to.

"Oh, and darling," she said, "you will produce drink, won't you? Much drink. You don't mind?"

In those days the word "American" was always preceded in England by the word "rich," silent or spoken. I said yes, of course.

Somewhere Laura found three bottles of American gin. English gin at that time was about half as strong as American. We didn't know this.

It was a perfect mews, with an ornate arch over the entrance, the kind of elegant, useless

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structure that helps to define the past. Ursula's house was the sootiest on her side. Noise bulged from her two open windows as we trod the cobbles toward her blue door.

The crowd, the small living room, seemed to embrace us. We delivered our bottles, and Ursula said, "Darlings, how blesséd. We're parched." She gestured with her prematurely veined hand at four or five empties on a sideboard. Laura undertook to mix drinks as I, recognizing a few faces in the mob, slipped into it.

Ursula introduced me to a neat man in a dark suit, a white shirt and stiff collar, with a silver tie in a precise knot. His clothes were unusual because most of the others were less well dressed, the men in worn sports jackets, the women in rummage-sale things. "You *must* meet this man," Ursula said to me loudly, in front of him. "Tony has just started his own publishing. Marvelous. Gorgeous books." His name was Tony Lassiter. We shook hands, more or less. She left us.

"Yes," he said languidly, as if I were reporting to him. His voice cut through the babble. He was in his thirties. He looked carved of ivory. "Yes, I know. You're Ursula's American. I have been told. In publishing, hmm?"

By now I was used to anti-American feeling. It wasn't uncommon, but it was restrained, often put jokingly. I wrote it off as natural in people who had endured so much more than their allies, were still enduring more. I hadn't yet had it thrust at me.

Yes, I said.

"Any particular house?"

Quite particular. Two, in fact. The British one was Allied.

"Mm," he said, as if he had known and had been testing my truthfulness. "Paperbounds, I believe. A person named Hand."

He rose from the back of the sofa on which he had been sitting and moved off.

I turned to others, then to others, all pleasant, engaging, stimulating. Then something odd happened. The party began to melt. People didn't leave, in fact a few more arrived, but all of them seemed to dissolve slightly, like snow men and women under a rising sun. I soon found the reason. They were drinking martinis. They were used to gin-and-French, as they called it, mixed half and half, with English gin. Laura was making martinis, three to one, with American gin. The room became like a scene in a film where the focus shimmers to suggest a dream.

Ursula, a veteran drinker, was only tiddly. "Divine drinks, darling," she said as we met somewhere in the room. "You and Laura must do all my parties. How did you and Tony get on?"

I told her, briefly.

She waved her old woman's hand at the end of her young arm. "Piffle. Don't be put off. He's a duke's nephew, and he can't forget it."

I could, I said.

"But he does publish gorgeous things." She told me the name of his house, and I vaguely recalled a smartly printed brochure.

A man took Ursula away. I wound through the dissolving room, steady because I wasn't drinking gin. Inevitably I encountered Lassiter, again on the back of the sofa, one of the few other steady figures. He was sipping red wine, swinging one leg.

"Ah, yes," he said, "the vendor. Small room here. Bound to meet again. Well! Vended anything since last we met?"

I told him he was mistaken. Rich Americans didn't vend; they bought.

"Of course," he purred. "Silly of me. Land of steaks and butter, yes? Well! Buying hot properties, are you?" He relished the Yankee phrase.

None hot enough so far, I said. The available British books were tepid.

"Poor old Brits. Can't write any more, alas. Or perhaps," he said, "it's the offers that are tepid?"

Not especially, I said. For instance, if he had any books we could use, we might make him a non-tepid offer. For American and British paperbound rights.

He sipped his wine, amused. "And what would that be?"

Two hundred pounds advance, I said. I knew that, although this was less than the equivalent of what Eagle often paid in New York, it was about four times the going advance in London at the time.

When I spoke the words "two hundred pounds," a terrible thing happened. His face changed, not slowly. The words did to him what the gin had done to the others: he

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melted. He knew he was changing, he knew he was losing himself, he knew he couldn't help it. He flushed in the knowledge.

I hated it. I had mentioned the money to see the effect, and I hated it. I liked him better as the Yank-hating duke's nephew. That was his proper role in my experience of London, not this.

After a moment, he managed words. "We might meet," he said.

I said it was possible.

"Perhaps lunch," he said further. "At my club. Might amuse you."

I said it was possible. He said he would ring.

I suspected that he was the man Ursula had tapped to remain after the party. Privately I hoped he would regain himself.

That night I looked over his brochure and saw that there was nothing in it of use to us. All very English: gardens and horses and minor military biography.

At least he never telephoned. I was grateful for that. At least he recovered his dislike. But that minute amid the drunks was terrible.

IV

Then there was Bob Thorley. Quietly chummy Bob, the sales manager of Allied, who took me under his social wing. It was business-world social, nothing like the duke's nephew; it was private restaurants without price-fixed menus and drinking clubs that weren't obliged to heed the legal closing hours. I had been ready to dislike Bob on sight as fitting the pattern of the New York operator, usually taller than I, who put his arm around me when introduced and favored me with hearty confidences and side-of-the-mouth jokes. Tall Bob approached the same way, limping a bit, but there was no arm around the shoulder and his talk was keyed low.

Bob said early in my stay, "Some pals I'd like you to meet," but I met only one. He took me to a private dining club in Arlington Street, luxuriously furnished, and introduced me to a small, dapper man about forty, with a fringe of black hair around a gleaming head and a voice overly mellow for his frame. "Ted Constable," said Bob as if the merit of the man were now self-evident. I asked if he was one of the publishing Constables. Ted waved his palm at me. "Nothing to do with them. Not related. See why you ask, though, in this company. No, I'm in the advertising dodge."

They were both members of this place; both were fussed over by the staff. The two lunches I had there with them were by far the best meals I had in London that summer. Our talk was never anything but chat, time out from the day on both sides of it.

Their tone implied that they wished I could join, not just the dining club but London itself. "Should have seen it before the war," said Ted. "Right, Bob?"

"Marvelous," said Bob gravely.

"Bloody marvelous," said Ted. "Best place in the world. No offense," he said to me quickly.

None. New York was in my bones, I said, but I thought London was pretty marvelous right now.

"Not bad," said Ted. "But it's changed. The fine edge. Not quite the same."

"Different," agreed Bob. "Things not as, I don't know, as right as they used to be. Used to be able to depend on things more. Depend on people."

"Exactly," said Ted. "Cracked a bit. Not the Blitz. I don't mean the bombs. I mean, well, service and reliability and, oh well," he said to me, "you know, all the sorts of things the bloody silly English like about England."

"Place like this," said Ted, nodding at the room, finishing the whiskey he had been sipping with his chops, "gone off a bit."

I said I had wanted to see London ever since I could read, and I was glad to be here even if it was too late.

"Oh no," said Ted, "don't misunderstand. Still bloody fine. And I'm glad you *are* here. You know, in a curious way, Stan, you don't seem a visitor. I mean, you don't sound English or anything of the sort, but you seem to fit. For a Yank. Right, Bob?"

"Thought so from the first," said Bob.

I was being conned, of course, but I didn't see that it could have any aim other than pleasantness. Besides, I liked the conning.

"Bob, we're old enough to have a lager," said Ted. "Let's have a lager."

"Right you are," said Bob and snapped for a waiter. He knew by now—he acknowledged with a wink—that I wouldn't be drinking more after my one luncheon drink. "Two

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lagers," he confided to the waiter.

"Ankyou, sir."

As we walked out after lunch, I had the impulse to ask Bob about his limp, but I thought it would be crude. A lot of people I saw in the streets had limps or scars or pinned sleeves, or carried canes.

Outside the club, Bob and I parted from Ted. "Not the last you'll see of me, I'm afraid," said Ted, holding my upper arm. "We need to knock back a few more together while you're here."

I said I'd enjoy it, although I knew it was true only because seeing him was one more way of knitting into London. The Teds at home were another matter.

As Bob and I got in our taxi, he handed the commissionaire a ten-shilling note. That was an immense tip in 1951. I assumed that it was expense-account money; still, it was more than lunch cost in many places.

One afternoon a few days later, Bob and I went together to see a publisher in Mayfair. Afterward Bob said, "We're only just across the road from Ted's quarters. Let's nip over for a quick one."

I was interested to see Ted's office—I wanted to see all I could—so I agreed. Beside the doorway of a town house in this quiet street was a modest brass plate: "Constable Co. Advertising Agents." The foyer was dim and expensive. An attractive receptionist recognized Bob. "Oh, Mr. Thorley. Lovely to see you."

"Hullo, Mavis dear, lovely to see *you*." He introduced me, which didn't much concern her.

She said, "Mr. Constable's on a trunk call. I'll just pop in and make frantic signs."

"Don't disturb him, Love."

"Oh, he'll want me to," she said, getting up. She was tall and had extraordinary legs. "It's some tiresome Midlands person. Mr. Constable doesn't even want his account. Won't be a tick." She disappeared.

She reappeared and took us into a large room. It was swathed in curtains and rugs, and there were two crushed-velvet sofas. No publisher's place had been like this. Perhaps there were world standards for advertising people.

Ted, in a rich brown suit and a creamy white shirt, with his jacket sleeves and his shirt sleeves unbuttoned and rolled up, rose from behind an acre of desk; was glad to see us; called us tramps wandering about the streets in search of free grog; opened a mahogany bar and gave us whiskey in wineglasses. He asked me how I was getting on. I said that what I was getting on best with was London. Bob asked him about a new staff man he had been after, and Ted said he'd had to offer the man the earth but had got him, had to have first-class help because he was overworked. After some more chat, I asked Ted about the pretty woman and child in the leather frame on his desk. "Taken last year," he said. "Married a little Yiddish girl four years ago. That's our boy. Couldn't be happier. You must come and see us, you and your good lady wife. Bags of room in our weekend place. Angmering. On the sea. I think you'd like it."

"And a lot of quite jolly people," said Bob.

I thanked Ted, with all the office sincerity I could muster, but I was afraid time was pressing. He understood. I enjoyed being invited for an English weekend and not being able to accept.

Bob and I left soon. Mavis tipped a fingertip kiss to him. The narrow, white Mayfair street was flowing with people going home. At the corner a man in a cap with a kerchief round his neck was selling flowers out of a huge basket at his feet. At the far corner was a street organ. The organ-grinder had a big mustache and a spangled jacket; a little girl in a spangled skirt held out a tambourine for coins. There must have been street noises, but I didn't hear them, I heard only the street organ. I walked through the low, late Mayfair afternoon, with Bob and his limp that came from the war.

V

The limp was from the war but not quite as I imagined. Next morning I was in Simon's office at Allied with him and Reggie. Bob was out on business. Reggie, over Simon's scowling protest, pulled a slim book from Simon's shelf and handed it to me. It was a volume of medieval French poetry that Simon had translated. I was impressed.

"Oh, keeps me out of mischief," said Simon. "Partly."

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The note on the back flap mentioned Simon's education and previous translations and said that he had spent four years in the RAF. I said that I never asked English people about their war experience because I assumed that everyone here had been in it, one way or another.

"More or less," said Reggie. "Home Guard, if nothing else. Like blind old Hand."

Simon said, "I phrased that stuff on the flap very carefully, to sound dashing. Actually, I was a clerk." Clark.

"Actually he did sensitive translation and interpretation of intelligence," said Reggie.

Simon muttered, "Right. Empire couldn't have muddled through without me."

"What about Bob?" I asked. "That limp of his. I haven't mentioned anything, but I assume it was the war."

Simon said "Ahrr," and Reggie twinkled. "I suppose one could say that," said Reggie. "It was from an army trunk. A trunk fell on his foot—full of band instruments. He was an army bandsman. Drummer."

He glanced at Simon; Simon looked back, then looked away. I felt that there was something they wanted to say and had decided not to say it. They knew I knew that. That was what they had told me: that they had decided not to speak.

I finished Part One of the business trip. Laura and I went away for two weeks, then came back to London. The very idea of coming back, of returning to London, was spacious. I almost expected to be recognized by the railway porters.

I began my round of follow-up calls. I had visited about two dozen publishers before the break. While I had been away, a few of them had written to say that they had no books for me. With the others, Miss Dobbs, the secretary, had already made appointments. I was rushed; I had one week to deal with two weeks of preparation.

We were to leave for New York on Saturday morning. On Thursday afternoon, quite late, I went back to the Allied office to pick up some books. Only Simon and Reggie were there. When I came in, I sensed that they had been waiting for me.

There were some small jokes, but they didn't wait long. "Look," said Reggie, sitting next to my desk, "we must speak to you. There *is* something."

I said I had thought so.

"We know," said Reggie, glancing at the owlish Simon. "Sorry to be so sidewise about it, but it's devilish dicey. It's not a matter of confidence in you. Not that at all. It's just that what we say is hard to prove, and besides it sounds so blasted self-serving."

I asked them not to worry.

"Well, thanks," said Reggie worriedly. "Still . . ." He paused, then went ahead. "Well, we must speak. Face to face. It's not something we can put in a report. We can only tell it to you and hope that you'll put it in the same way to Sam and Fergus." Top officers of Eagle in New York. "Finally, it's our jobs at stake because it's the health of the whole blasted company here that's at stake."

My mind raced ahead to guess, but I made it come back to listen.

It was Bob Thorley. They had no absolute proof, not yet, but they believed he was making private deals with the printing and shipping people, skimming off kickbacks, siphoning off money in other ways. He had been an assistant sales manager with a big publisher after the war and had done pretty well; after he came to Allied he began running around with big-spending types, "wide boys," had left his wife and kid and was "banging about" with women, was betting a good deal, and was generally over his head. He was still good when he worked, but he didn't buckle down to it hard enough. It had been going on for four or five months. Reggie and Simon had been looking forward to my visit because they wanted to speak, not write. Even now it was risky because they could prove almost nothing, but by the time they could prove something, a good deal of damage might be done.

I thought of London, not the company. I wasn't shocked about Bob, just clarified. Now I knew what all the social plying had been about, with swanky Ted, to lull or even enlist me. But it was London I thought about first. London now was easier to believe.

Good-bye, coziness of the No. 73 red bus, compressing all of us passengers into a temporary club every morning. Good-bye, unflawed warmth of pubs, reassurances of the pearly twilights in the little streets. The next

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time I saw London I would be a husband, not a swain.

I said I would relay the message, as given, next Monday in New York.

Bob may have suspected that they had talked to me. He may have been saving that last Friday for his clincher with me, to get me in somehow, to lock me to him, then possibly he backed off rather than confirm what I had heard. He went out of town on Friday. But he sent Laura a going-away present, a pretty little enameled trinket box.

VI

New York looked like a city of the future that, mysteriously, I knew well. On Monday morning I spoke to Sam and Fergus, and ten days later Fergus went to London. A week after he arrived, Bob Thorley resigned. I heard that he went into advertising with Ted Constable. None of that was surprising. But a month later Reggie Hand resigned, too, to go with another publisher. Simon, the scholar-owl, took over Allied and ran it for years, well.

Soon after we got home, Laura sent a suit to the Hands's little boy, jacket and knee pants. Margaret wrote us a note, saying how much Colin loved it. "And he's absolutely fascinated by the zip on the pants. He keeps undoing it and doing it all the time, in private and elsewhere. Remarks have been made." I had forgotten that zippers were not yet common on English trousers, a wartime restriction. I had noticed buttons in the lavs of restaurants.

Men's rooms are not the key to my London of 1951, but I do sometimes think of those English fly buttons nostalgically. The person from that summer that I think of most often is Bob Thorley. Now he seems like one kind of war casualty, not the drummer's limp but as if he couldn't resist small luxuries, small greeds after a long, thin time.

I never heard why Reggie left Allied. Perhaps he had too much pride to profit by Bob's troubles after he had disclosed them, perhaps just a better offer. I never saw any of them again, though occasionally I read Simon's name in a review of a new translation.

Out of the whole trip, all the scurrying and reading, I wasn't able to find one book to recommend to Eagle. As they had promised, no one minded. The trip had been good for Allied, for Eagle, for me, they said. For me it was true in a way they couldn't know. Five years later, when Laura and I went to London on our own and lived there for a bit, it was a different city for me, clearer in fact and in expectation. Still, fact is not everything, sometimes it is not anything. I kept the first London in my head, not for guidance but for thumbing through privately, a city of heroes getting back to tea and umbrellas. Fact had nothing to do with it.

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Flute Song

RICHARD DANKLEFF

'Twas a curious fact that when Judge Russell played
his flute at night, his horses came and stood
on the cabin porch. When the music soared they paid
such careful heed they seemed to gauge the mood
and quality of tone. Clear nights, wet nights they stayed
and stamped a few times when an extra good
sustained diminuendo that would fade
and seem forever lost (the flute might brood,
as if the Judge were sorry or afraid)
came flowing back crescendo in a flood
of notes as bold as warblers trill when shade
or leaves conceal the singer. Soft or loud,
the Judge's hermit-thrush arpeggios could pervade
so tenderly the Cascade solitude
that daybirds, wakened, may have long delayed
to sleep again (they were so sweetly wooed)
and ghosts of ladies may have tried to wade
the deep horse-pasture creek but, baffled, cooed
forlorn cadenzas back across the glade.
Seldom did a nicker or stamp intrude
upon the solo flute. And the nags obeyed
a strict decorum. When nature called, they would
walk off a decent way and stand; they made
even those tail-high interludes
slow and stately, in deference to the serenade.

RICHARD DANKLEFF is at work on a collection of poems set in the nineteenth-century West. *Popcorn Girl,* a collection of his twentieth-century poems, was published last year by Oregon State University Press.

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Books

The Novel in Wonderland

JOSEPH FRANK

THE IDEA OF THE NOVEL IN EUROPE, 1600–1800. *By Ioan Williams. New York University Press. $18.50.*

TIME AND THE NOVEL: THE GENEALOGICAL IMPERATIVE. *By Patricia Drechsel Tobin. Princeton University Press. $12.50.*

We have come, in our time, to take the novel so much for granted as a dominant literary form that we tend to forget how recent has been its rise to prominence. Only in the eighteenth century did the novel begin to replace older genres, like poetry and the drama, in popularity and importance; and only since the first quarter of the nineteenth century have we had (more or less roughly) any criticism of the novel worthy of its name. Until that time, novels had been written against a background of centuries of critical neglect. One reason was that in the past the novel was seen primarily as a popular form, read for entertainment and relaxation rather than for instruction and enlightenment. Moreover, no place for it really existed in the system of classical literary categories inherited from the Greeks. Hence the novel was never taken seriously as art, and hardly more than passing attention was paid to it in the criticism of the past. Beginning in the eighteenth century, to be sure—when the novel began notoriously to compete with the more traditional literary modes—a few critics (or novelists like Fielding) did start to speculate about its characteristics. But these scattered remarks were hardly picked up and expanded, and one looks in vain to the history of novel criticism for any general guidance to the nature of the genre and to the attributes, evolution, and interaction of its varieties (such as the picaresque and the romance).

This situation has of course changed considerably, and we are unquestionably at a moment when the novel has become the center of critical attention. Works have appeared within the last thirty-five or forty years that mark a new era of self-consciousness in novel criticism and that are long likely to remain as setting a classic standard. Books such as Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel*, Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, and Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (to mention only a few titles) are major achievements which synthesize much of the scattered work of their predecessors and lay the foundations for the future. What the tasks of this future are likely to be can be inferred, it seems to me, from some of the characteristics of the works mentioned above. Like most histories of the novel, Watt's book, for all its outstanding merits, is still limited to one national literature, and in this case also to one short stretch of time: eighteenth-century England; the rest of the world, and of the history of the novel, is excluded. Again, the sharpness of the insights in Booth and Genette is confined to questions of technique and form; the thematic material of the examples they analyze either is not at issue or is handled only tangentially.

The merit of the two books under discussion here is that both, each in its own way, attempt to widen this present horizon of criti-

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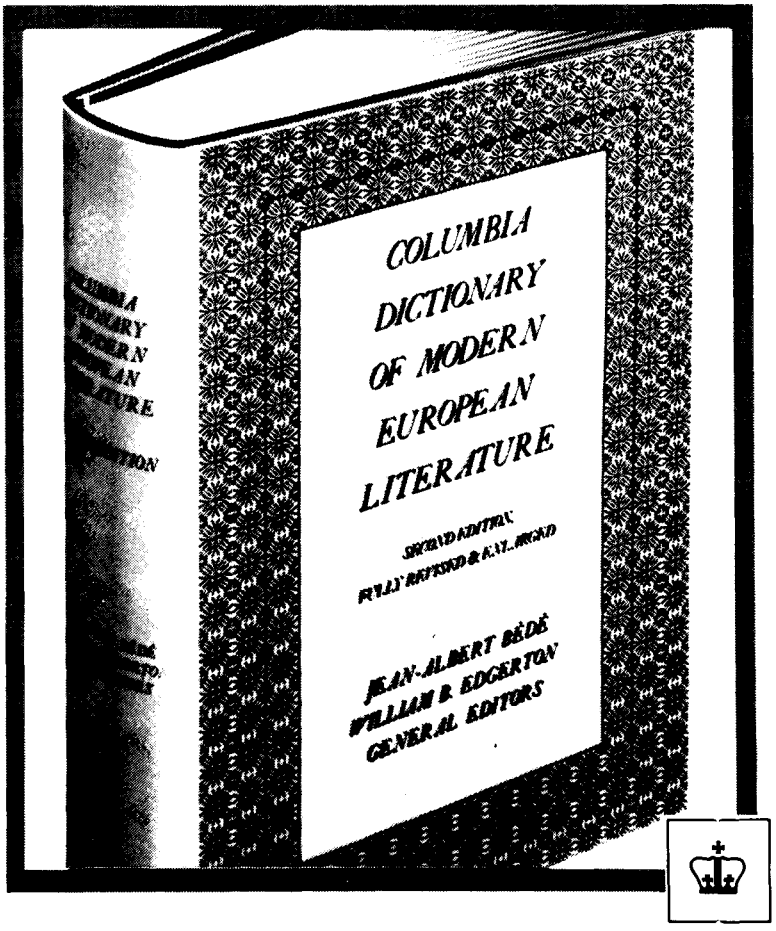

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cal inquiry. Ioan Williams's work is one of the very few in English that try to grapple with the history of the novel as a genre across national boundaries, and to work out categories applicable to the form as a whole. Patricia Tobin is concerned with novelistic structures and their relation to time (the latter conceived, as we shall see, in a highly idiosyncratic fashion). And while, accordingly, she may seem to be studying only the technique of the novel, in fact she tries to correlate stylistic with thematic change, and grounds her theory in a dizzying bird's-eye view of the history of culture from (presumably) the caveman to the computer. Both critics have thus seen, or at least felt, some of the limits of contemporary criticism of the novel, and have tried to go beyond them. But both suffer from weaknesses that ultimately can be traced to the lack of a generally accepted set of genre concepts and the absence of a commanding critical tradition. We shall return to this point later; now let us give the two books the serious scrutiny they deserve.

Critical speculation about the novel, as we have said, only began seriously at a relatively late stage of its development. To be more precise, it began just after the vogue for Walter Scott had passed and the historical novel had evolved into that depiction of contemporary life (what George Steiner has called the urban Gothic) which portrayed the problems of ordinary people with the gravity once accorded only to the aristocratic personages of epic or tragedy. As Balzac said, the sufferings of his provincial Eugénie Grandet were no less cruel or fateful than those of the House of Atreus. Contemporaries were thus struck by the new "realism" of the nineteenth-century novel (which meant precisely this treatment of ordinary life in terms previously reserved for more exalted milieus). "Realism" thus became the central critical category for all discussions of the novel, and its entire history was organized in such a perspective. This led to the view, still prominent in Watt, that the novel was somehow born in eighteenth-century England and was essentially a product of middle-class culture. (Even Patricia Tobin, who is terribly up to date about everything, still continues to believe that the novel really began "in 18th century England"). As a result, earlier forms of the novel were neglected or critically depreciated, and this accounts for the failure to work out any unified view of its history that can really be considered satisfactory.

One of the merits of Williams's book is precisely that he tries to do justice to this earlier period of the novel's history over two centuries. It is not clear whether the temporal limits he assigns himself were imposed externally or chosen for reasons of symmetry, but we can only regret that he does not overstep them a bit. Beginning as he does with the first part of *Don Quixote*, he includes only a few preliminary remarks on Cervantes's precursors, the Spanish picaresque novelists; and since he constantly uses this latter term, some discussion of them would have been in order. Moreover, his chapter is entitled "The Novel as Romance," and some consideration of what that term means would also have been quite useful. The romance, after all, is the modern form of the old epic, with its aristocratic heroes who represent the highest values of their society and class; and it is out of this dialectic between the picaresque and romance that the modern novel (*Don Quixote*) was really born.

To be sure, Williams does not put it quite in these terms, but he grasps the essence of the matter, it seems to me, when he observes that "Cervantes became a novelist not because he shared the reductive realism of the picaresque writers or the medieval moralists, but because he was an idealist." In other words, the major tradition of the novel does not derive, as most writers tend to assume, exclusively from the "reductive realism" of the picaresque, with its essentially debunking and satirical view of life. Rather, it emerges from the fusion of "this realist impulse" with "the ambitiously humanistic impulse of Renaissance romance and pastoral." It was by playing one off against the other, and by focusing on the "constant interchange which takes place in experience between conceptual factors and the demands arising from human nature," that Cervantes succeeded in creating a classical paradigm for the new literary form.

Williams's discussion of the second part of *Don Quixote*, published ten years after the first, is of particular interest because he compares this second part with the false contin-

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uation issued under the name of Avellaneda. This mysterious writer, whose identity has never been established, brought out a supposed sequel to the life and exploits of Don Quixote; and Cervantes then resurrected his own characters to set the record straight. Avellaneda, as Williams sees him, was both a rationalist and a moralist, who reduced the original tension between the imaginative and the real in Cervantes's great characters, and thus greatly shrank them in stature. Sancho became gross and stupid; Don Quixote's madness was much more carefully motivated, but the result was only to make him foolish rather than sublime. Oddly enough, this false *Don Quixote*, in which the picaresque and romance elements tend to fall apart, actually indicates what will happen to the novel as a genre in the immediate future.

During the first part of the seventeenth century, the great synthesis effected by Cervantes was not maintained, and the romance and the picaresque went their separate ways (of course in much altered incarnations). The new romance was no longer some form of the medieval knightly epic but, rather, the baroque heroic novel strongly influenced by Renaissance pastoral. What Williams calls alternatively "comic Romance" or "anti-romance" also flourishes, and the second term seems preferable and less open to misunderstanding. The result, however, was either to "project a heightened version of standard man in the romances or depict a reduced version in the peasant and the madman." Williams has very little patience with heroic romance and does not take the trouble to analyze it at length—which can only be regretted in view of its perennial importance. The artificiality and absurdity of the interminable novels of d'Urfé and Mlle de Scudéry should not be allowed to obscure their social significance in setting standards of behavior and ideals of comportment that have continued to influence the history of the novel right down to the present day.

"Anti-romance" is given fuller treatment, and Williams distinguishes between two types. One, Charles Sorel's *Le Berger extravagant*, simply imitates Cervantes while criticizing his exaggerations and lack of verisimilitude. But in Sorel's *La Vraie histoire comique de Francion* and Scarron's *Le Roman comique* Williams finds closer approaches to genuine novels, and in each instance the terms he uses once again point to some sort of fusion of the picaresque and the romance. Sorel mixes "an inspiration derived from the picaresque with a Rabelaisian vision of life as a whole, and adapt[s] it to a structure borrowed from the classical epic." The distinctive quality of Scarron lies in his linkage of "the element of reductive comedy" to a strong "romanesque element" in a manner suggested by Cervantes, "though quite different from anything found in *Don Quixote*." Both writers are "strongly committed to the idea of the gentleman as combining the best of the old heroic qualities," while these are projected against "a comic background in which human passions [are] unmoderated by refinement and unelevated by nobility of sentiment." Each of these works is thus a transposition of the Cervantic synthesis in a French seventeenth-century context; and though Williams disclaims any intention of establishing a definition of the novel, some such definition, as we have indicated, constantly emerges from his own historical investigations and literary judgments.

The last quarter of the seventeenth century saw the abrupt end of the reign of heroic romance, and the rise of a new form called the *nouvelle* (the origin of the English word "novel," which in French is still called *roman*). This would have been the place for Williams to treat the greatest seventeenth-century French novel, *La Princesse de Clèves*, but he disposes of that work abruptly in a disappointing paragraph. Apparently he does not think of it as a novel at all, and calls it a "romance" adjusted to "a dramatic plot." Perhaps the lack of any obvious picaresque element is what threw him off, but this component of "realism" is provided by the depiction of the underside of court life, whose ruthless sexual intrigue is set in contrast to the surface seen in terms drawn from heroic romance. The Princesse de Clèves wishes to live by the romance ideals of loyalty and fidelity in an unscrupulous picaresque world where sexual betrayal is the accepted norm, and she is caught in an insoluble conflict between the two. Most of the other *nouvelles*, however, even though protesting against the bombast of the heroic romances, do little

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more than cut down the complications of romance plots; there is nothing elsewhere comparable to Mme de La Fayette's disillusioned view of the human condition.

The most interesting fiction writers of the time (Robert Chasles and Alain Le Sage) were both directly involved with the Cervantic tradition. Chasles published a part of a continuation of *Don Quixote* begun by another writer; Le Sage put together a translation and adaptation of Avellaneda. Le Sage also translated one of the masterpieces of the Spanish picaresque, Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*. His own major *Gil Blas de Santillane* is of course a continuation of the picaresque mode, but with "a consistency and logical development" of the main figure lacking in the Spanish model. Also, Gil Blas is no longer essentially a comic or satirical character. Even though from a modest social milieu, he is by no means a rogue or a scoundrel and does not stand in opposition to the world in which he lives. By making Gil Blas a Spaniard, Williams remarks acutely, Le Sage distances him from French society (where he would have had to be either a comic valet or a gentleman), and thus can represent "an individual at once socially insecure and capable of serious emotional experience." Once again the picaresque ("social insecurity") and the romance ("serious emotional experience") combine in a new amalgam to renew the Cervantic synthesis and to pave the way for writers like Fielding, Scott, and Dickens.

Up to the end of chapter 3—despite far too much space given to plot summary—Williams manages to keep some control over the wealth of material he has to cover. In chapters 4 and 5, however, which deal with the eighteenth century, the book simply falls apart. The reason is probably that throughout the seventeenth century it was fairly simple to use the categories derived from his point of departure in Cervantes; but he abandons them after this and is unable to find any others that will pull his exposition together. The result is that we get a more or less disconnected series of little essays on a large variety of writers; these contain interesting observations but hardly add up to anything like the history of a genre. Some perspective is supposedly provided by introductory sections sketching in the general background. "There was an increasing tendency [in the novel]," we are informed, "to reflect certain developing tendencies in modern life: a greater moral seriousness, interest in sexual and personal relationships, a greater sense of society as a whole and as a context for the individual human being," and so on. Such vague generalities are, regrettably, no substitute for a firmly held critical point of view.

This relative breakdown of the book, exactly at the point where the novel really comes into its own, is perhaps due to a loss of nerve (with which one can sympathize) caused by the wealth of great works demanding consideration at this time, as well as by the necessity of dealing with three national traditions (French, English, German). But, more fundamentally, it seems to arise from a failure to grasp how the genre concepts hitherto used could apply to the new modalities of the novel then being created. Yet Defoe clearly evolved a new version of the pure picaresque; Richardson tried to create a middle-class heroic romance; Fielding and Sterne were self-conscious followers of Cervantes (Sterne turned *everybody* into a Don Quixote obsessed by a hobbyhorse); Rousseau renewed the pastoral in a French bourgeois guise and gave it a subversive thrust. Such lines of continuity have to be explored if we are ever to have a genuine history of the novel as a form.

Finally, it is impossible for me to understand how Williams can justify omitting any discussion of the Gothic novel—the most important new mode created in the late eighteenth century—which revitalized the old knightly romance and, by its treatment of landscape and plot construction, opened up the artistic road to the future. Despite such shortcomings, however, Williams's book is the only recent work of its kind in English, and is well worth the attention of anyone concerned with the subject.

If Williams can justly be charged with a certain conceptual timidity, then Patricia Tobin stands at the very opposite end of the spectrum in this regard. Her book is nothing if not full of ideas (whether one can or should accept them is another matter), and displays such evident pleasure in the sheer play of mind that one cannot help sharing some of

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her own zest for ratiocination. Also, her book is written in a bright, bouncy, jaunty style (no dull academicism here!) which communicates some of her own enthusiasm for her subject. She is, incidentally, a very good literary critic when she descends from her theoretical heights to talk specifically about novels; and it is these sections of the book which, in my opinion, are of most value. But literary criticism as such interests her very little, and she affirms that "like any formal construct, the novel may be fully understood only at a logical level higher than its own making." It is this "logical level" that galvanizes all her considerable theoretical energies, and that must be examined if we are to grasp her point of view.

The book originated, she tells us, as a result of "an overwhelming hunch that the problem of time might provide a key to modern consciousness"; and this last phrase is the most important. For though nominally offering a theory of the novel, Patricia Tobin is really hunting for much bigger game—nothing less than to provide a "key to modern consciousness." What happens in the novel is thus only a symptom of much larger events occurring in the culture as a whole. As a result, it is impossible to disentangle her theory of the novel from all sorts of other ideas about the state of modern culture—ideas which, to say the least, are highly controversial, and which treat most of the norms that have always been more or less accepted as the basis of civilization as instruments of terror and repression. "Although the empirical evidence has yet to sustain the thesis," Tobin writes blandly, "it would seem that in the child's surrender of private autonomy in favor of parental power can be found the seeds of domination and the germs of subordination that will become the action of history." The family is thus *nothing but* tyrannical power, history *nothing but* domination and subordination; what empirical evidence has to do with such a thesis escapes my comprehension. The book is based on assertions and assumptions of this kind which are never justified, simply taken as more or less self-evident truths. This is, of course, not the place to argue such issues in their own terms, but mention of them must be made so that the reader will know what to expect.

So far as literary theory is concerned, Tobin begins by noting that temporal process has no particular structure and that man imposes patterns on time to give his life meaning. The novel reflects this patterning and in doing so does not imitate "undeliberated, organic life-in-time," but rather our human impositions on its randomness. "Realism," according to Tobin, means that a novel conforms to these human structures of time: "a realistic novel convinces us . . . because it structures experience the same way we do." She believes, however, that we are not fully aware of the extent to which we shape and manipulate time, and hence finds it necessary "to bring Time out of hiding" by explaining some of the implications of this confusion between unstructured and "human time." For this purpose she produces her key term, "the genealogical imperative," which is the controlling metaphor richly developed throughout her pages.

On the basis of one article by the sociologist Robert Nisbet, who is supposed to have "demonstrated" (?) the matter, Tobin argues that at some point in the dark abyss of the past, poor primeval man confused simple temporal succession with genetic descent. Just as a father founds, controls, and dominates the family, so time began to be seen and felt "within a line of causality similar to the line of generations, with the prior event earning a special prestige as it is seen to originate, control and predict future events." Hence temporal anteriority became endowed with all the power of the father to discipline, control, and castrate if need be. From this fateful confusion—if we take Tobin's thesis seriously—date all the ills of Western civilization. (Others are presumably exempt, though how they escaped, according to her point of view, is not very clear. Do not fathers and families exist in, say, China?)

In any event, "the genealogical imperative," once launched on its momentous path, now begins to exercise its baneful rule over all the domains of Western civilization. Families become totally patriarchal and oppressive; religion becomes Judeo-Christian, linear rather than circular, hence valuing life in time and, in Protestantism, "confusing this forward motion in time with secular progress." From Calvinism and the work ethic we get "quantification, inherent in capitalism," and the genealogical imperative thus begins

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to take over the entire world of economic and social life. Western languages are dominated by the sentence, and this is especially frightful because "the sentence is hierarchical: it implies subjections, subordination," hence oppression. Thought goes completely haywire when it becomes linear-causal rather than analogical, and, worst of all, "science, philosophy, history all become possible, once a beginning or origin can be sanctioned in such a way that all future stages in the process that follows can be referred back to that initial authority"—i.e., various genealogical orders. Happily, though, there is a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel: "the demise of genealogical thinking is roughly coterminous with the swerve away from linear narrative in twentieth-century novels (and a few novels of the nineteenth) that are the concern of this study." The mind boggles at the chaos that would ensue if such a "demise" actually took place over the vast areas that Tobin has surveyed in her introductory chapter.

Such a demise, though, *has* taken place in the modern novel, and when Tobin gets down to talking about literature she gives us more than warmed-over Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida spiced with tidbits from her wide reading in the social sciences. To be sure, she makes only a perfunctory attempt to sketch the past history of the novel, which for her begins in eighteenth-century England and contains nothing of value except *Tristram Shandy* (the sacred text of all time twisters) and *Robinson Crusoe*. The latter is read, à la Lévi-Strauss, in terms of the imposition of culture on nature and as a depiction of the origins of imperialism and historical domination. (But it cannot, as Tobin claims, really have "institut[ed] the master/slave culture of Hegelian analysis." Hegel's master is a warrior-aristocrat who would never dream of sullying his hands with anything as demeaning as manual labor.) Actually, as Tobin implicitly admits, her true subject begins only in the nineteenth century, when time becomes definitively tamed and linearized by Darwinism and historicism. "Victorian man discovered that to be living in time was no longer a fallen state, but rather the very field of action on which he could win the twin trophies of earthly success and spiritual salvation." Hence the triumph of the Victorian novel, "where spacious familial accommodations are always guaranteed by the patrilinear consistencies between beginning and end, past and future."

What interests Tobin, to use a favorite image of her own, are the "wild cards" of this tradition, which in some way disrupt both the time line of narrative and conventional moral-familial patterns. *Wuthering Heights* makes sacred the mythic, illegitimate lovers Cathy and Heathcliff, who put their offspring and progeny, united in the "domestic ideal of social marriage," completely in the shade. Melville's *Pierre* scrambles the family line by incest, and the story line by impenetrable ambiguity. Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* rejects both the future and the father. These are the immediate precursors of that heretical tradition of the novel which Tobin wishes to set against the more usual "great tradition" established by F. R. Leavis—that is, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad. Her remaining chapters, with the exception of the conclusion, are devoted to individual analyses of novels by Thomas Mann (*Buddenbrooks*), D. H. Lawrence (*The Rainbow*), Faulkner (*Absalom, Absalom!*), Nabokov (*Ada*), García Márquez (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*).

These chapters constitute the heart of Tobin's book, and, whatever disagreements one may have with specific points of interpretation, they all contain quite lively, ingenious, and stimulating performances. It is impossible here to do justice to them in any detail; but in general Tobin's aim is to show how, beginning with Mann's ironic counterpoint between familial disintegration and strict temporal and narrative continuity, there is in each of her selections an increasing breakup of both the patrilinear family and the novelistic structure. "All the sins against the family—adultery, illegitimacy, bigamy, fratricide, parricide, and especially incest—can be found within a spectrum of value that arches from the recognition of disorder to its joyous celebration." Accompanying such thematic disorder is an appropriate artistic eccentricity: "The simple line, which served well enough as the spatial configuration of genealogical structures, is replaced by such wild divergencies as the double cycle, the circle, the spiral and the Moebius strip." These quotations, however, give only a faint and schematic notion of the complexity and

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density of her readings, which can be heartily recommended to anyone interested in her texts and willing to participate in a strenuous but rewarding intellectual exercise.

These chapters, all the same, do not comprise anything that can be called a "theory of the novel," even the modern one. What they show is that, in some modern novels, one can find both familial disorder and technical experiment. But since, as Tobin admits, only a handful of works display this "homologous continuity between time-line, family-line, and story-line," the probative value of her selections remains highly questionable. Only if one accepts all her other speculations will these novels seem to be more than an arbitrary (though very interesting) choice; and by the time the book is finished, as we shall see in a moment, it becomes doubtful whether Tobin herself still remains fully persuaded by her own conjectures. In addition, one of her procedures as a practical critic also calls for a brief comment. She is fond, as she says, of reading "against the grain," focusing not on what the author has put in his book but on what is left out. The purpose of such reading is to call attention to the amputation of possibilities imposed by the genealogical imperative—for example, the refusal of Thomas Mann to envisage that the feminine Toni Buddenbrooks could capably have taken over the family business. One shudders to think of the flood of irrelevancies that would overwhelm us if critics all began to write about what was *not* in the works being discussed. Incidentally, how many children had Lady Macbeth?

By way of conclusion, Tobin offers some predictions for the future. Naturally enough, she sees the novel continuing to proceed even more radically along the path already marked out. We live in a world where the authority of all the old "genealogical orders" has lost its power, and hence the novelists of the future will, as she puts it, "wager on the surface." No longer in thrall to the old binary oppositions of the Western mind (her reverse ethnocentrism really becomes very tiresome; has she never heard of yin and yang?), the novel is destined to become more and more aleatory and ludic. "In an ultimately unfathomable world, one should have the lucidity and good nature to salute all systems, including history, as obsessive mistakes." Hence the novelist will play with them all and "develop strategies that at once trigger and frustrate the symbolizing process in the reader." Effects of depth and transcendence will be shown to be illusions and returned to the surface, where "undifferentiated space might accommodate all that had been discreetly outlawed by the time-line of genealogical narrative." As an example of such possibilities, Tobin pertinently invokes Cortázar's remarkable *Hopscotch*, which portrays a character who attempts to live in a world of the type Tobin envisages, and who equally wishes to escape "the slowness of a world vision limited to the binary." Unfortunately, she neglects to inform the reader that he ends by going mad.

Until the very last pages of her book, Tobin's own attitude toward the developments she charts—the breakdown and demise of the genealogical imperative—seems to be vigorously affirmative, and her tone even becomes snippily supercilious when dealing with other points of view. But then, suddenly, we find her writing:

> The negative estimate of our current situation also marshals powerful arguments. Perhaps the literary revolt against the paternal authority is but one sign of a generalized drift away from all authority. Perhaps antilinearity in narrative is symptomatic of a prevailing ahistorical attitude that values only the fleeting present. Perhaps the new freedom is another disguise for ideological blindness. . . . If the novel refuses voice and vision, if it refuses connection with our world, then how can the anonymity and self-sufficiency of its writing speak to the human condition?

One would not have known earlier that a concept such as "the human condition" still retained any validity in Tobin's framework of ideas.

It would seem as if, just as she was on the point of finishing her book, Tobin had begun to question all the conceptual premises she had hitherto taken for granted. This may explain why she now decides that "too much of the literal in literature lends itself too readily to being regarded as a unique, self-contained commodity." (The "literal" in her terminology is equivalent to that of "surface.") Hence, "if postmodern fiction does not speak to and for our culture [but how could it not have done so if her previous analyses are correct?], perhaps postmodern criticism can." And such

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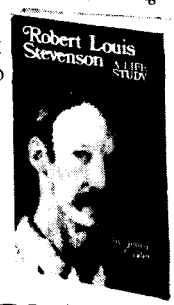

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"postmodern criticism," curiously enough, will abandon "the semiotics of the text (structuralism being the critic's wager on surface)" and return "the text back to the world." The task of the critic would be to restore "the cultural context" and supply "the missing referential linkages . . . that [marry] human time to its literary space." But "human time," with its unquenchable urge to create "genealogical orders," returns us back to where we began.

Patricia Tobin has a powerful, wide-ranging, and gifted mind, obviously in the full course of transition and metamorphosis. Now that she has cut her critical teeth and seems to have outgrown the very latest Parisian fashions, it will be most interesting to see where she goes in her next book.

What, however, can her book and that of Williams tell us about the larger issue raised at the beginning of this review? Both reveal the difficulties of writing about a literary genre where all the categories are fluid and nothing has been definitively established or can be taken for granted. It is for this reason that Williams ultimately does not know how to link pre-eighteenth-century forms with the first great age of the novel, and does not realize the full systematic implications of his own insights. The new modes and combinations are not seen—as they would be in the drama, for example—as variations on a structure whose components are known and accepted as relatively stable.

Another consequence of this fluidity is seen in Tobin, who is so entranced by the latest experiments that she is inclined to regard nothing in the past as worthy of interest except what foreshadows and announces the most recent revelation. In other words, every new variety of novel is taken as an absolute beginning, which requires a rewriting of the whole history of culture to explain its apocalyptic appearance. In neither case do we get any sense of the history of the novel as a continuous, if continually evolving, tradition (though Williams does manage to give us such a sense for at least one century). There is a crying need in criticism of the novel for efforts such as his to be pursued along similar lines but with more boldness and conceptual daring than he could muster. Only in this way may we be able to overcome the present confusion, and the endemic lack of inherited ideas about the genre on which we can rely.

The Avid Martyr

THE LETTERS OF GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 1830–1857. *Selected, edited, and translated by Francis Steegmuller. Harvard University Press. $12.50.*

Reviewed by ROBERT M. ADAMS

Not every distinguished author is a good writer of letters; the art form represents a particularly difficult balance to strike. Most informal correspondence by writers, however eminent, is boring because it deals with personal responses to trivial circumstances, quickly and properly forgotten even by the participants. Too many such letters survive, alas—reverently collected by devout biographers, compressed into heavy volumes, and placed like tombstones over the author's memory. More embarrassing yet are those letters in which the author takes advantage of his correspondent to deliver resonant messages to Prince Posterity, glimpsed or imagined peeping over the addressee's shoulder. We are likely to feel toward the writer something like Queen Victoria's animus against Gladstone (he addressed her, she complained, as if she were a public meeting). Too private or too public, too trivial or too pompous, literary letter writers must hew to a fine line. Perhaps such letters are at their best when the authors are simply thinking out their professional problems but are not yet sure whether their thoughts will amount to anything. There are phrases in the letters of Keats (about "negative capability" or "the vale of soul-making") that have palpably determined the way his poems were read, perhaps even the way in which they were created. So also with Stendhal, whose letters, journals, and disguised autobiographies make up a rich tapestry of motifs that had only to be transposed and adapted (ah, but with what art!) into the later novels. So, finally, with Flaubert—especially the young Flaubert, whose correspondence admits us into the laboratory at the very moment when the materials for *Madame Bovary* are being assembled, blended, and heated in the furnace of the author's imagination.

ROBERT M. ADAMS is a professor of English retired from UCLA. He is the author of *Bad Mouth: Fugitive Papers on the Dark Side.*

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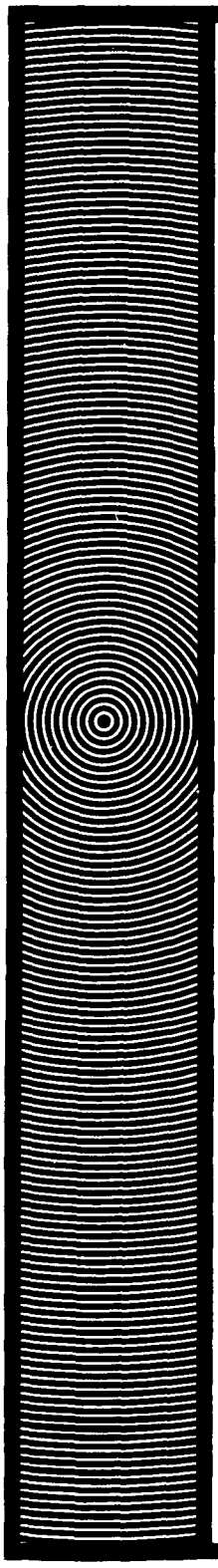

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Mr. Steegmuller, who has selected, edited, and translated Flaubert's letters in the new volume issued by Harvard, is no stranger to intimate study of the novelist. His double biography, *Flaubert and Madame Bovary*, published in 1939, is a study of Flaubert's *grande affaire* with Louise Colet, and of the book whose agonizing genesis accompanied it. He has translated the novel itself, and published a collection of materials pertaining to Flaubert in Egypt. In 1953, Mr. Steegmuller also published the *Selected Letters of Flaubert*—that selection made, perforce, from the old Conard edition originally published in 1902. For the new book, however, he has been able to work from the Pléiade edition of Jean Bruneau (volume 1, 1973), and this has made possible a distinct enlargement and improvement of the earlier volume. Specifically, the Conard edition was supervised by Flaubert's niece Caroline, a vigilant prude who, with a ruthless pair of scissors, bowdlerized the text like a Gallic Mrs. Grundy. Even letters written by Uncle Gustave at the age of ten (!) were subjected to this process. In addition, Steegmuller's 1953 selection contains about a third fewer letters for the period covered here (1830–57) than does the present book; its footnotes are much scantier, as are the bridge passages of summary, transition, and explanation. Altogether, the new edition abundantly justifies itself, even though the selection of letters is still pretty stringent. The 1953 translation contains about 114 letters or parts of letters; the new Harvard edition has about 160; but for the shorter period to 1851, the Pléiade edition, with its micromicron paper, contains, by my count, 389 complete letters, plus 100 to 125 answers to Flaubert's letters, plus notes and variants to make the narrative context clearer. Pléiade takes about 2,000 pages to cover the years 1830–1851; Steegmuller compresses the same period into about 150 pages.

Besides adding new material, Mr. Steegmuller has gently worked over his old translations, altering a locution here and there to make the phrasing run a little more smoothly or to add a nuance. Whether, as recently as 1953, he could or would have given us Flaubert's undiluted bawdy is a question; he does so now, and it's all to the good. One can't praise the finished work more highly than by saying that it does not read like a translation at all yet checks out perfectly against the original. This is what translations are supposed to be like and rarely are—natural, deft, and precise. It is a pleasure to read.

Ritual requires one to say that because Flaubert revealed so little of himself in his novels, to know the man intimately one must resort to the correspondence. There's some truth to this, in that we learn from the letters about certain processes entering into *Bovary* that we would probably not intuit from the hard, polished surface of that novel. But of Flaubert's inner life, that elemental substructure which he described to Louise Colet as "granitic," we never do learn very much—apparently because Flaubert himself did not (and did not want to) study it very closely. The reader who rambles through this volume from beginning to end, as collections of letters are made to be rambled through, will be amazed that Flaubert in 1857 was only thirty-five years old. It isn't simply that he talks repeatedly about how old he is, how much his physical condition has deteriorated, how he has exhausted the dregs of experience and burned out his capacity for feeling; he is also, even as early as the age of twenty-four, making categorical declarations about his "character" which imply that it's absolutely inflexible, fixed forever in its values, incapable of change of any sort:

> God did not give me a merry constitution; no one senses more keenly than I the wretchedness of life. I believe in nothing—not even in myself, which is rare. . . . You would not believe me when I told you I was old. Alas, yes, for every sensation that enters my soul turns sour, like wine poured into jars too often used. If you knew all the inner forces that have consumed me, all the mad desires that have passed through my head, everything I have tried and experienced in the way of sensations and passions, you would see that I am not so young! . . . what I love above all else is *form*, provided it be beautiful, and nothing beyond it. . . . The only things that exist for me in the world are splendid poetry, harmonious, well-turned, singing sentences, beautiful sunsets, moonlight, pictures, ancient sculpture, and strongly marked faces. Beyond that, nothing. . . . I am above all a man of fantasy, caprice, lack of method. [Letter of 6 or 7 August 1846]

A good deal of this first-person-singular rodomontade may well make us suspicious. (That little phrase "which is rare," in the sec-

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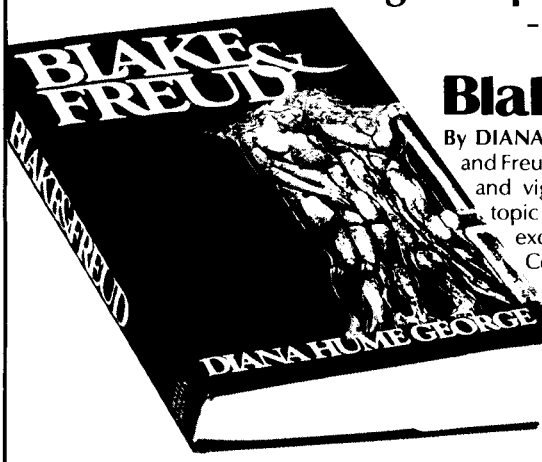

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ond sentence, betrays a good deal of youthful self-importance.) The letter was written to Mme Colet in the first days of her affair with Flaubert and, like many of his self-explanations, had the purpose, only slightly camouflaged, of holding the lady well beyond arm's length. Objectively speaking, not a great deal had happened to this young man to justify a comparison (in the same letter) with Numidians, who systematically seared their skin over hot coals to make them insensitive. He was of a comfortable bourgeois family in a modest provincial town; want was something he would never experience in his entire life. He had quit his legal studies in disgust after about three years of not very successful, but also not very violent, application; he had suffered something like migraine or epileptic attacks. His father and sister had died abruptly within a few months of one another; his best friend had just got married. Except for the ailment of 1844–45 (which did not prevent his finishing a first draft of *L'Education sentimentale*), none of these episodes, painful as they doubtless were, seem much beyond the common hazards of existence. But Flaubert felt deeply scarred, disqualified for life, and so accepted martyrdom in the cause of his art with an avidity that makes one suspect he was really intent on avoiding something else. He lays down his "self" as a cold, austere, unchanging law to keep from recognizing some of the human things that made it.

One of the pleasures of this new volume is the chance it gives one to meditate on the forces that lay behind that shield of self which served to stop so many inquiries. Young Flaubert's furious, exaggerated reactions to the marriage of his friend Alfred Le Poittevin, his terrified anxiety lest his mistress become pregnant, his deep self-disgust, his special relish for prostitution, his long record of syphilitic and gonorrheal infections, his special relation with his semi-sacred mother, his choice of a mistress eleven years older than himself—all these make up the materials for a curious psychological pattern, within which sadism masquerading as idealism played no small part. But hardly ever in the correspondence does one find Flaubert himself questioning any of his basic attitudes. He takes absolutely for granted his reaction of dismay and betrayal at the marriage of Le Poittevin—an event which makes him feel at twenty-four "inordinately aged, older than an obelisk" and about which he can't bring himself to say even a normally polite word. He is horrified, aghast, appalled at the thought of finding himself a father; that the same event might make his mistress a mother, with some consequences for her life, he seems not to have noticed. He never pays much attention, either, to the possible consequences of sleeping with the woman he loves while he is himself suffering from uncured syphilis.

Certain patterns of expression—and therefore of thought and feeling—go back so far in his correspondence that one could probably call them innate. He is given, for example, to that downward rhetorical arc that one could call excremental anticlimax. A letter to Ernest Chevalier, written at the age of fifteen, plays with its own dating:

> (St. John's Day, the longest day of the year, on which it chances that that old jokester the sun, among its other antics, dons its Sunday clothes, turns red as a carrot, draws sweat from grocers—hunting dogs—the National Guard,—and dries out the turds in the streets.)

At the age of ten, his first literary endeavors were a eulogy of Corneille and a solemn, comic treatise on constipation. The mannerism, trifling as it is in these early forms, expresses an attitude of verbal command and a potential sadism of which there's no better finished example than that climactic scene in *Salammbô* where the captive mercenaries are bound hand and foot, laid on the ground in windrows, and trampled into bloody mush by Hamilcar's war elephants.

Reading the correspondence alone leads, among other things, to the strong sense that Flaubert, young or old, was an intensely disagreeable man. He could not have cared less; he would want us to judge him by his art, and in reading the correspondence it's the potentiality or presence of that art that holds the center of our attention. Even here there are limitations. One can hardly read his raptures over Shakespeare without an ironic smile, because if ever there was a non-Shakespearean author it was Gustave Flaubert. A lot of his palaver about the beautiful, and Art with a capital A, is likely to strike us as just that—palaver. His taste included an unusual measure of tolerance for the gaudy and the kitschy. Yet the grim, self-punishing devotion

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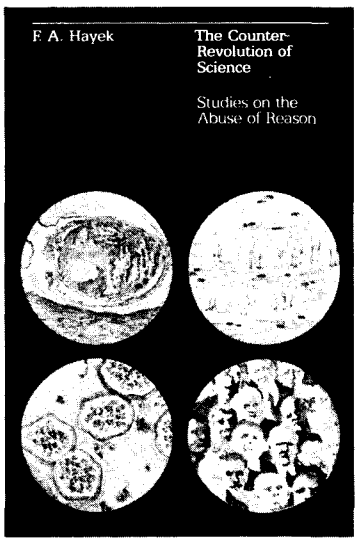

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that led him to take, against his own grain, the most banal of subjects (adultery) in the drabbest possible environment (the French provinces), and work on it for years of solitary drudgery, was the conscience of a great artist. He was a sculptor with words, not a confessional-analytic parader of his heart; even about his own self and his own writing, he wrote best when he wrote as through veils of irony and distance. Nowhere are we closer to bare autobiography in *Madame Bovary* than when Rodolphe, just before deciding to break with Emma, reflects on her frenzied phrases of adoration:

> He had so often heard these things said that they did not strike him as original. Emma was like all his mistresses; and the charm of novelty, gradually falling away like a garment, laid bare the eternal monotony of passion, that has always the same forms and the same language. He did not distinguish, this man of so much experience, the difference of sentiment beneath the sameness of expression. Because lips libertine and venal had murmured such words to him, he believed but little in the candor of hers; he thought that exaggerated speeches hiding mediocre affections must be discounted;—as if the soul did not sometimes overflow in the emptiest metaphors, since no one can ever give the exact measure of his needs, nor of his conceptions, nor of his sorrows; and since human speech is like a cracked tin kettle on which we hammer out tunes to make bears dance when we long to move the stars.

What's so elegant about this much admired passage is that we're never sure when we're in Rodolphe's mind and when we're in Flaubert's. If passion is eternally monotonous, always with the same forms and the same language, then there is no difference between Emma and any other easy pickings, and there is also no difference between Rodolphe's cynicism and Flaubert's. But apparently there *is* a difference of sentiment beneath sameness of expression; the two attitudes have an impact on one another, and the disparity between desire and its expression is drawn out in those last murmuring, expanding phrases. About the mind that could form that paragraph (artists, Flaubert told Mme Colet, are all triple thinkers) we can never know too much; the delight of this volume is that it helps us measure the extraordinary bluntness and many delicacies of that mind.

Harvard University Press is to be congratulated, not only for an unusually handsome volume but for pricing it—not unreasonably, by the standards of our ridiculous day—at $12.50. An oddity one can't help wondering about is why Mr. Steegmuller's footnotes cite, in all seriousness, Jean-Paul Sartre's three-volume study of Flaubert when his brief bibliography lists a review by Harry Levin that absolutely and permanently demolishes it. Special kudos for footnote 4 on page 136, which includes the notable information that "Alberto Moravia greeted the present translator in Athens with the words: 'Have you been to the Parthenon yet? It's like lobster meat.'" Scholarly books should include more such tasty morsels.

Arawaks

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. *By Howard Zinn. Harper & Row. $20.*

Reviewed by OSCAR HANDLIN

This is a book about Arawaks.

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Such is the story Zinn purports to unfold. He ascribes the topsy-turvy quality of his description to its perspective—the Constitution viewed by the slaves, Andrew Jackson by the Cherokees, the Civil War by the New York Irish, the Spanish-American War by Cubans, the New Deal by Harlem blacks, and the recent American empire by Latin-American peons. Alas, he can produce little proof that the people he names, from slaves to peons,

OSCAR HANDLIN, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor at Harvard University, is the author of many historical works.

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saw matters as he does. Hence the deranged quality of his fairy tale, in which the incidents are made to fit the legend, no matter how intractable the evidence of American history.

It may be unfair to expose to critical scrutiny a work patched together from secondary sources, many used uncritically (Jennings, Williams), others ravaged for material torn out of context (Young, Pike). Any careful reader will perceive that Zinn is a stranger to evidence bearing upon the peoples about whom he purports to write. But only critics who know the sources will recognize the complex array of devices that pervert his pages.

This book pays only casual regard to factual accuracy. It simply is not true that "what Columbus did to the Arawaks of the Bahamas, Cortez did to the Aztecs of Mexico, Pizarro to the Incas of Peru, and the English settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts to the Powhatans and the Pequots." It simply is not true that the farmers of the Chesapeake colonies in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries avidly desired the importation of black slaves, or that the gap between rich and poor widened in the eighteenth-century colonies. Zinn gulps down as literally true the proven hoax of Polly Baker and the improbable Plough Jogger, and he repeats uncritically the old charge that President Lincoln altered his views to suit his audience. The Geneva assembly of 1954 did not agree on elections in a unified Vietnam; that was simply the hope expressed by the British chairman when the parties concerned could not agree. The United States did not back Batista in 1959; it had ended aid to Cuba and washed its hands of him well before then. "Tet" was not evidence of the unpopularity of the Saigon government, but a resounding rejection of the northern invaders.

Since Zinn does not comprehend the simple meaning of words, he labels John Adams an aristocrat and Theodore Parker a racist, and turns free trade into imperialism. Talk of liberty and country Zinn considers a rhetorical device to conceal rule by the rich few, and the Revolution of 1776 he describes as just the creation of a legal entity to take over land, profits, and power. Woman, in status, was "akin to a house slave."

Zinn does not scruple to use insidious rhetorical questions to convey affirmations he is too shy to make openly. "Could patriotic fervor and the military spirit cover up class struggle? Unemployment, hard times, were growing in 1914. Could guns divert attention and create some national consensus against an external enemy?" Thereupon the First World War becomes an effort by the American elite to divert attention from its internal problems. Other paragraphs sprinkled with question marks reveal the Supreme Court "doing its bit for the ruling elite," almost justify the attack on Pearl Harbor, and distort the internment of the Japanese Americans.

Biased selections falsify events. A chapter entitled "The Other Civil War," for instance, covers the years between 1837 and 1877. It includes anti-rent riots in New York State, the Astor Place riot in New York City, Dorr's War in Rhode Island, and the railroad strikes of 1877—thus bracketing quite dissimilar and unrelated outbreaks of violence to give the impression of a country torn by ceaseless civil conflict.

On the other hand, the book conveniently omits whatever does not fit its overriding thesis. In view of the epilogue, it is startling to find no notice taken of the long series of communal experiments stretching from the eighteenth-century Moravians down through Brook Farm and on to Oneida. Humanitarianism, benevolence, idealism would not jibe with the portrayal of a totally materialistic nation. For the same reason, there is no explanation of why the discontent that welled up in Shays' Rebellion subsided as quickly as it did. But then Zinn freely tears evidence out of context and distorts it—for example, in the discussion of the period down to 1941 when imperial ambitions led the United States into war. American aggression continued after Vietnam, rearranged but pursuing the same vile military and economic goals. Not a word about the Soviet Union, of course.

Focusing upon the dimly known Arawaks of the past, whose shadowy shapes can take any form, the book cannot do justice to the great variety of actual people who inhabited the United States. The blacks and whites, immigrants and natives, laborers and farmers, merchants and manufacturers cannot be known when treated as lay figures to be manipulated according to the author's fantasies.

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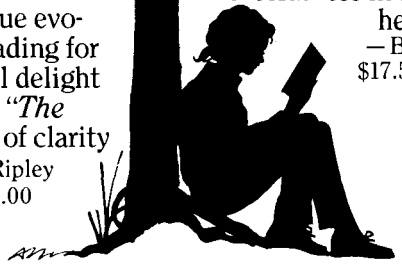

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The description of how the eighteenth-century population understood the First Amendment is pure invention. Reactions to the Mexican War are scarcely more substantial. Nor can Zinn understand the men and women, indiscriminately labeled the elite, who helped shape American society and its institutions. By his account, only one motive moved them: greed—from Columbus rapacious in the quest for gold to Carnegie lusting for profit. Hence the blank incomprehensibility of those who acted contrary to their interests. Why did John Marshall come to the aid of the Cherokees? Why did the Grimkés turn against slavery? Why was Andrew Carnegie an active anti-imperialist? To answer such questions would have called for an examination of intellectual and social forces beyond Zinn's ken. Indeed, since the dominant tradition of liberal reform in the United States was staunchly pro-American, he must interpret it as only a device by which the elite protected its own interests.

It would be a mistake, however, to regard Zinn as merely anti-American. Brendan Behan once observed that whoever hated America hated mankind, and hatred of humanity is the dominant tone of Zinn's book. No other modern country receives a favorable mention. He speaks well of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, but not of the states they created. He lavishes indiscriminate condemnation upon all the works of man—that is, upon civilization, a word he usually encloses in quotation marks.

Against it, in the epilogue he juxtaposes a loving community of neighbors who cooperated without coercion—a community exemplified by the Arawaks, who are fit objects for fantasy because nothing is known about them. Early in the book, Zinn quotes a Spaniard's description of other pre-invasion Indians who lived in peace and amity, six hundred in a conical hut. Life may have been carefree, even idyllic, but it could not have been easy under those circumstances. No doubt a twentieth-century American would find the actuality of six hundred people to a hut difficult to imagine. And perhaps the events in Guyana show what can happen to such numbers cooped up together, driven in upon one another in their loving community.

Few such societies are driven to suicide, as was that in Jonestown. But rarely are any of them capable of dealing with the crises and contingencies of human experience.

And in that regard we can learn something from the Arawaks, although Zinn is too obtuse to do so. What discussion ensued among those Indians who greeted Columbus or Cortez we shall never know. Perhaps they hoped by friendly gestures to propitiate the strangers and persuade them to leave. Perhaps, already aware of their own helplessness, they thought to stave off attack by appeasement. Perhaps internal dissension, or lack of organization, or will weakened by ease prevented them from following another course. Lacking evidence, we cannot know. But the outcome we do know, and from it we can learn. From Montezuma to Tecumseh, people who lacked the political means to defend themselves were helpless to resist the invaders animated by a vision of what they wanted and driven by the will to seize it.

The American people of actuality—whom Zinn does not discuss—were not Arawaks in the past. Nor are many likely now to respond to his invitation to share the fate either of Jonestown or of the Aztecs.

Pun and Games

GÖDEL, ESCHER, BACH: AN ETERNAL GOLDEN BRAID. *By Douglas R. Hofstadter. Basic Books. $18.50.*

Reviewed by MAX DELBRÜCK and SOLOMON W. GOLOMB

Hofstadter's book, like the subject matter it describes, exists simultaneously on many strangely intersecting levels. It is at once a dissertation on mathematical logic, a treatise on the intricacies of Bach's musical compositions, a text to accompany a rather extensive assemblage of Escher prints, a collection of dialogues involving Achilles and the Tortoise,

MAX DELBRÜCK, a professor of biology at the California Institute of Technology since 1947, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine in 1969 for his work in molecular biology.

SOLOMON W. GOLOMB is a professor of electrical engineering and mathematics at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

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The Other Side of Racism

A Philosophical Study of Black Race Consciousness

By Anne Wortham. Though she is quick to acknowledge the legitimate gains of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 70s, the author of this remarkable book alleges that the freedom movement was considerably more than an attempt to redress racial injustice. It was an exercise in coercive egalitarianism and reverse discrimination that substituted quota privileges for meritorious achievement, and rationalized historic victimization as justification for the political and economic favoritism it advocated and, indeed, demanded. Furthermore, she charges, it constituted a revolt against psychointellectual independence for the individual in its espousal of institutionally imposed solutions to the personal dilemma posed by an ethnic and racial consciousness. $12.50

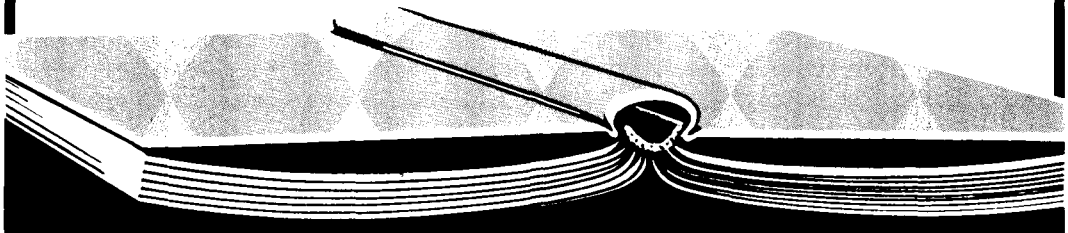
Brecht's America

By Patty Lee Parmalee. Nearly every critic who has written on Bertolt Brecht has noted that the America in which many of his plays are set is a strange, cinematic, almost mythical land in which gangsters are the principal folk heroes, boxing the primary national pastime, and jazz the chief cultural pursuit. But though Brecht's notions of life in the United States were, in their distorting simplicism, clearly reminiscent of a familiar and persistent European stereotype, they transcend, through the exercise of his special and subtle sensibility, their origins in sometimes superficial impressions and commonplace assumptions, and bring both to his drama and its American setting the acuity of his precise perceptions. Published for Miami University. $25.00

Pre-Text/Text/Context

Essays on Nineteenth-Century French Literature

Edited by Robert L. Mitchell. If diversity precludes coherence in nineteenth-century French literature, it can itself be recognized as the "organizing" principle of this literary epoch; and it is precisely this paradox that the essays in this volume intend to reflect. They are not unified, as orthodoxy might dictate, by a common approach or theme or author. Rather, they are marked, as was the century that is their context, by divergence and variety, not harmony and consistency. Multiformity in theme is reflected in discussions of such varied topics as pygmalionism, allegory, mirage, self-consciousness, plagiarism, madness, feminism, the grotesque, dance, and alchemy, which are addressed, in turn, from a variety of critical approaches: thematic, intertextual, historical, stylistic, psychocritical, sociological, and semiotic. $20.00



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an introduction to computer science, a sampling of Zen koans, an attempt to describe both human and artificial intelligence, a discussion of classical problems in number theory, and a formal presentation of Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem. This material is developed with frequent references to particle physics, molecular genetics, and epistemological issues, liberally interspersed with puns and paradoxes.

The identification of what the book really is will vary with the observer. Like one of its Escher prints, it is hard to be sure what is the *figure* (foreground) and what is the *ground* (background). Is Gödel's Proof the essence of this capsule, and everything else the sugar-coating? Or is Gödel merely another background illustration of the central theme of self-referential phenomena? Or, alternatively, is the entire book really just a rather shaggy Zen koan to assist in the ultimately nonverbal meditation on the nature of consciousness? We were surprised, in this context, not to find any mention of the *I-Ching*, that standby of latter-day mystics. One hypothesis, difficult to refute, is that this book represents the author's brave attempt to synthesize everything he ever learned.

Independent of what it *really* is, it largely succeeds as a book. It is entertaining, engrossing, enlightening, informative, provocative, and has appeal to a surprising breadth of readership. While it contains little that is individually new, the juxtaposition of ideas and topics is creative and thought provoking. People in a wide variety of fields will feel that it captures an essential insight which they did not realize was so broadly applicable. There is even a distinct danger that the book may become the central scripture of a new cult. The author himself asserts, "In a way, this book is a statement of my religion." To his credit, he has not given it a title ending in *-etics* or *-ology*, and has coined no new term that could be catchily applied. (Hofstadterism seems too unwieldy to pose a serious threat.)

The book is about recursive phenomena—things that refer to themselves, are defined in terms of themselves, think about themselves, and so on. Indeed, it is this theme which embraces mathematical logic from Cantor's diagonal method to Gödel's theorem (as well as recursively defined sequences and theories), human and artificial intelligence (the kind which can contemplate itself), molecular genetics (where each generation recursively determines the next by DNA replication, et cetera), and numerous other examples adduced by Hofstadter.

A thorough review of the book in its own frame of reference would start at the lowest level, and comment on the quality of the paper, binding, and ink. In fact, the book is well produced, and the type font attractive. The text editing was done, we are told, under the author's computer control. There are relatively few typos for a first edition of a lengthy book, and the most common of these are "stutters" at the letter level (*CCrab, TTortoise*), at the word level (*the the, be be, of of*), and, in one case, at the sentence level; although in this book it is dangerous to assume that anything is unintentional (especially when one discovers CCrab and TTortoise also appear in the index!). At the next level up, the author identifies a text in an exotic script at the end of the list of illustrations as "The beginning of Genesis, in ancient Hebrew." In reality, the script is of the distinctive Samaritan variety from the fifth century A.D. ("ancient Hebrew" script would refer to the "Canaanitic" script used before the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.); the text is an abbreviation, consisting of only the first three or four words of key sentences (verses 1, 3, 6, 9, and 11) in the first chapter of Genesis; and the entire inscription is printed upside down! (The author's unacknowledged source—Hans Jensen's *Sign, Symbol, and Script*—correctly identifies the script and the text, but already commits the inversion error.)

At a higher level, Hofstadter explains why a "human expert can quite soundly and confidently trounce the best chess programs of this day." Six years ago, this statement would have been plausible. However, by the time the book appeared, the best chess programs had achieved ratings in the expert to master range, and had on occasion beaten International Grand Masters. (The first IGM to achieve the dubious distinction of losing to a computer was Michael Stean of the United Kingdom in late 1978.) In fact, at speed chess the best computers now regularly outperform mere mortals. The author also cites a 1940 study which, he claims, showed that masters do not normally analyze chess positions to a

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greater depth than do amateurs. This is highly misleading at best. A study of eye movements has indeed demonstrated that the stronger the chess player, the less "breadth" of analysis takes place (that is, fewer continuations look fruitful), but the allotted time is undoubtedly used to analyze the most promising lines to greater depth. The pinnacle of Hofstadter's misunderstanding of computer chess in particular, and artificial intelligence in general, occurs here:

> Question: Will there be chess programs that can beat anyone?
>
> Speculation: No. There may be programs which can beat anyone at chess, but they will not be exclusively chess players. They will be programs of *general* intelligence, and they will be just as temperamental as people.

What an inept pronouncement. It would have been far more plausible to suggest that the computer program capable of full-scale language translation, including everything from technical manuals to love poetry, would have to mirror the human experience on a broad scale and not perform mere substitution of words, phrases, or other lexical units. But in the case of chess, some would argue that among the more successful human players, several have been little more than chess-playing automatons. In keeping with the spirit of the book, we would have preferred the discussion of chess to have been in the form of a dialogue between Morphy and Metamorphy!

This brings us to the level, and the subject, of Hofstadter's puns. For example, in discussing the linear thresholding phenomenon in the activation of neurons, where the neuron "decides" to fire when the total of its inputs adds up to a critical value, he says this explains the familiar dictum, "I think, therefore I sum," which he further identifies as a translation of the Latin "Cogito, ergo am." A dialogue is titled "Djinn and Tonic." (The *tonic* has both medicinal value and musical overtones.) During the discussion of Fermat's Last Theorem, there is a fermata in the fugue which is playing in the background.

Some of Hofstadter's literary devices are strained, but many are marvelous. In one story (within a story within a story), Achilles obtains a magic lamp and, when he rubs it, a genie appears who offers him three wishes. Achilles replies that his first wish is for one hundred wishes. The genie demurs because that is a meta-wish, and he can only grant wishes, not meta-wishes. Achilles is sorely disappointed and the genie wants to help, so he takes out *his* magic lamp, and rubs it, and a meta-genie appears, who in turn must summon a meta-meta-genie. Fortunately, each summons takes only half as long as its predecessor, so the request goes "all the way" up and down the line in finite time. This episode bridges the gap between the previously discussed Zeno paradox, and the subsequently introduced principle of mathematical induction.

Assuming (as we do) that he is the originator, Hofstadter deserves special credit for inventing the strangely behaved function Q(n) defined by: $Q(1) = Q(2) = 1$, and for all $n \geqq 3$, $Q(n) = Q(n-Q(n-1)) + Q(n-Q(n-2))$. (One apparent regularity—$Q(3 \cdot 2^k) = 2^{k+1}$—works for $k = 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8$ but unfortunately fails for $k \geqq 9$.) Even more noteworthy is his invention of MIU, a simple formal system which helps to introduce the complexities of Gödel's work. In MIU, a "statement" is a finite sequence of letters beginning with M and followed by some pattern of I's and U's. We are given "MI" as an *axiom*, and four "rules of inference" for making new *theorems* (either directly from the axiom, or from previous theorems). Hofstadter's "MU Puzzle" is to decide whether "MU" is a theorem of MIU: that is, to determine whether the sequence MU can be obtained from MI by some successive application of the rules of inference. To solve this problem, one must go outside the procedures of the MIU system itself to a simple argument of number theory, which, as Hofstadter shows, implies that in any theorem of MIU the number of I's in the sequence cannot be a multiple of 3. In particular, MU has *no* I's, and since zero *is* a multiple of 3, MU is *not* a theorem of MIU. So far so good, but Hofstadter then misses an important pedagogic opportunity. Unlike Formal Number Theory, the system for which Gödel proved that there is no "decision procedure," the MIU system *does* have a decision procedure: a simple mechanical test to tell whether or not a given statement is a theorem of the system. Hofstadter failed to give the rather simple proof that every sequence beginning with M and followed by a pattern of I's and

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U's *can* be reached in the MIU system, provided that the number of I's is *not* a multiple of 3—as well as to observe that this test (whether the "I count" is a multiple of 3) constitutes a *decision procedure* for MIU.

After discussing the Goldbach Conjecture (that every even number beyond four is a *sum* of two odd primes), he introduces the conjecture that every positive even number is the *difference* of two odd primes, and calls it a "Goldbach Variation." (The dialogue had started with Bach's *Goldberg Variations.*) According to L. E. Dickson's definitive *History of the Theory of Numbers,* the conjecture that every positive even number is a difference of two odd primes, and in fact, in infinitely many ways, was first put forward by A. de Polignac in 1849. (Too bad it wasn't *Berg's* Goldbach Variation! For that matter, a hitherto undiscovered musical composition, Alban Berg's "Goldbach Variations," could have been introduced.) While this bit of scholarship might have interfered with the spirit of a dialogue stating that an even number which *is* the difference between two primes has the Tortoise Property, a footnote crediting de Polignac would not have been inappropriate. (We will not even mention that the same dialogue also refers to a *gold box, very Asian!* And that there is some doubt as to whether it is the *Tortoise's property!*)

In discussing the "weak" Goldbach Conjecture that every "sufficiently large" odd number is the sum of *three* odd primes, Hofstadter states (correctly) that this was proved in 1937 by I. M. Vinogradov, but (incorrectly) that we do not know how large is "sufficiently large" for this purpose.

Hofstadter is to be commended for his wide-ranging breadth of knowledge (much of it correct) and for his imaginative effort to tie together tidbits from far-flung fields. The main difficulty with the book is its length. To understand what the author says on page 400 you not only have to have read what he has said up to that point, but you have to have understood in detail everything that went before and to remember the specific imagery used to explain the argument. Thus, you are supposed to remember what "Tortoise property," "wondrousness," "the MIU puzzle," "quining," "arithmoquining," MUMON, JŌSHŪ, and many other terms stand for. (W. V. O. Quine should be pleased to see his name turned into a verb. In Quine's own book on logic, he indicates that his favorite number system is base five, the *quinary,* and his syllogisms frequently involve the need for *quinine.*) Readers already familiar with mathematical logic will be impatient with this process. The book has a good index, but consulting it often leads to searches in loops which you are not really sure will terminate. Readers not familiar with mathematical logic may become even more impatient. They will discover that the book's subject matter is not the simple fun suggested by the amusing style. On the contrary, if one really wants to appreciate the force of the arguments, one will have to go back and forth many times to let them sink in. This is true especially in chapters 13 and 14, where the author makes a heroic attempt to get Gödel's argument across essentially intact. It must be conceded that he does not cheat (by omitting essential steps), and that he does not foul up at the crucial point (as Nagel and Newman did in their book and their *Scientific American* article in 1956). It is also true, though, that the enormously lengthy buildup to the climax, through numerous stages and forms of self-reference, through "quining" and "arithmoquining," may leave the naive (and even the not so naive) reader completely befuddled, dizzy, and with a severe headache.

Must this be so? We cannot believe that it is. Perhaps the author should be encouraged, now that he has written a best-seller, to come out with "Sons of Gödel, Escher, and Bach," in which he condenses the present book to one quarter of its volume.

One may suggest that he omit, in this shortened version, the second half of chapter 16, on self-replication. This very lengthy and wordy episode is extraordinarily useless. What Hofstadter calls "Typogenetics" has very little similarity to real molecular genetics. Both readers who are reasonably familiar with molecular genetics (by now a considerable subset of the reading public) and those who are not will be thoroughly confused by reading the outline of a totally imaginary version. And to what avail? Actually, on page 514 the author starts all over again, and now tries to outline "*real* molecular genetics." This outline begins with a mistake about the meaning of the "deoxy" part of DNA and misstatements about the nature of

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hydrogen bonds. Otherwise it is straightforward. In fact it would be easy to understand if the reader had not first been thoroughly confused by assimilating Typogenetics, in which the same symbols for the bases, and the same words, "amino acid" and "enzyme," are used with entirely different meanings. The futility of the whole undertaking leaps to the eye when one considers the "Central Dogmap" [*sic!*] on page 533, where the alleged analogies between Molecular Biology and Mathematical Logic are spelled out. What could possibly be the meaning of analogizing self-replication of DNA and self-reference in formalized number theory? Especially bizarre, and surprising from a former physicist, is the statement of the "Reductionist's Dilemma" as follows: "In order to explain everything in terms of *context-free* sums one has to go down to the level of physics." Has the author forgotten the Uncertainty Principle, at the very heart of modern physics, and that even the hydrogen atom cannot be understood as a context-free sum of the properties of proton and electron?

We would like to suggest a similar scrapping of chapter 11 ("Brains and Thoughts") and chapter 12 ("Minds and Thoughts"). The first of these chapters muses on the problem "How are concepts represented in the brain?" After twenty-eight pages of rather unenlightened discussion, it comes up with the correct answer: "We don't know." Chapter 12 is vaguer still. In it the author muses about the question of whether languages, or indeed individual minds, can be mapped onto each other . . . certainly a question of long standing. There is perhaps no philosopher or poet who has not pondered it. Does the author throw new light upon it? We think not. And he is not likely to do so from the narrow basis of his thinking: mathematical logic and computer organization.

Part I of the book (the first nine chapters) is much better written than Part II (the remaining eleven). Hofstadter confesses, "I wrote this book twice. After having written it once, I started all over again and rewrote it." Part I has clearly benefited more from this process than has Part II. We doubt most readers will ever finish Part II, and as it now stands this may be appropriate. Its puns are more

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strained, its analogies weaker, its intellectual content less. Irrespective of whether the author is willing to admit these harsh criticisms of some of his chapters, we do believe that the book cries out for a shortened version. One may then gain some real enlightenment as to whether the connections of Gödel to Escher, Bach, Zen, and artificial intelligence amount to more than coffeehouse conversations.

Disremembering the Thirties

THE DREAM OF THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN: REMEMBERING THE THIRTIES. *By Malcolm Cowley. Viking. $14.95.*

Reviewed by SIDNEY HOOK

Two virtues are clearly possessed by this well-written memoir of the tumultuous thirties, of the rise of an influential radical intellectual movement and of Malcolm Cowley's role in it. First, it provides an absorbing account of the cultural and social climate generated during the years of the Depression and of the New Deal, particularly as they affected the consciousness of the middle class and professions. Although Cowley's account lacks the vividness of Edmund Wilson's *American Jitters,* it does communicate something of the alternating moods of bewilderment, frustration, despair, and hope that swept through those whose moorings had been cut loose by social phenomena beyond their intellectual grasp.

Second, Cowley recognizes that the allegiance of the vast majority of intellectuals attracted to the Communist party and its peripheral organizations was more religious than political: their commitment was total, based more on an emotional need to believe than on argument or comparative evidence. This led them to swallow infamies and outrages by the Soviet Union, always enthusiastically endorsed by the Communist party, that far transcended evils in American society—actions which when attributed to other totalitarian regimes reinforced the zealotry and orthodoxy of the Communist faithful.

However, with respect to the actual history of the radical intellectual movement of the thirties, the ways in which the Communist party exercised its influence and control over it, the attempts of various individuals and groups to contest, in the name of a more liberal and pluralistic conception of communism, the extremism and opportunism of the Party, their bruising conflicts with the orthodox, and their resolute attempts to tell the truth about the Soviet Union—with respect to all this, and particularly Malcolm Cowley's own activity during the decade, this book is from first to last a self-serving exercise in apologetics. Historians interested in compiling an accurate record of the period will be ill served if they accept its assertions on their face. For example, Cowley would have us believe that the reasons he did not join the Communist party, despite the extent and intensity of his agreement with its ideals and program, were his literary reservations in 1932 and his political reservations in 1935. To be sure, he was always uncomfortable with the Party's rhetoric but, judging by his writings at the time—which are accessible to those interested—there is not a trace of any political reservations. If anything, his enthusiasm for the Soviet Union and its American agents reached a higher pitch in 1935 when he helped organize the League of American Writers than when he helped organize the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford in 1932.

There is no evidence to show that Malcolm Cowley was ever asked to join the Communist party. Nor, I am convinced, would he have been accepted had he applied. For the truth of the matter is that he served the Communist party and what it represented better by not joining it and by functioning where he was, as literary editor of the *New Republic,* a post he could not have kept had he officially become a Party member. Already in early 1937 John Dewey, who had been one of the pillars of the *New Republic,* resigned as a contributing editor on the ground that the *New Republic* had betrayed the principles of liberalism, and, among other criticisms, had cited the tendentious way Cowley ran the

✪ SIDNEY HOOK, emeritus professor of philosophy at New York University, is senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford. Among his recent books are *Philosophy and Public Policy* and *Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life.*

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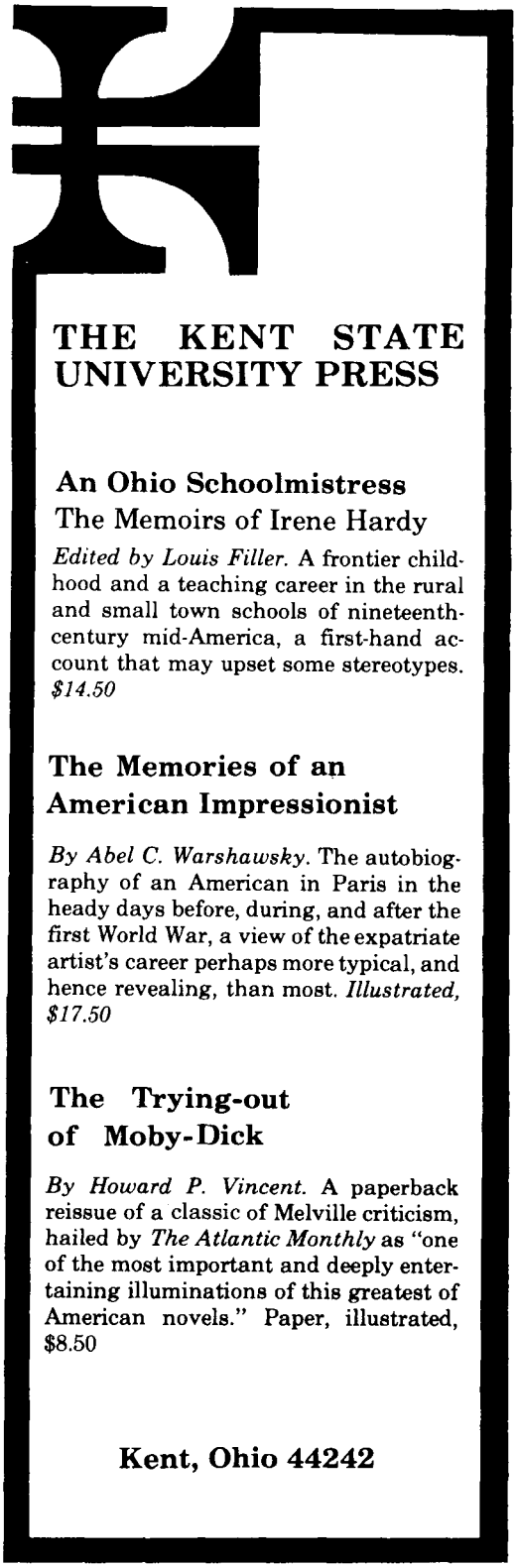
book review section. By the end of the thirties, despite Cowley's alleged political reservations about the Soviet Union, Edmund Wilson, his friend and patron, wrote to him in protest: "You have been carrying on in a way that matches *The New Masses* at its worst. . . . You write better than the people on the regular Stalinist press but what you are writing is simply Stalinist character assassination of the most reckless and libelous sort" (*Letters on Literature and Politics*). Coming from Wilson who, according to Cowley, was above the battle of factions, this is weighty testimony. Actually, from the Communist party's point of view, the fact that Cowley was not an official member was very helpful. It could cite his judgments on the Moscow trials and attacks on Communist critics and defectors as the findings of an independent non-Party thinker.

Before examining some of these judgments, it is necessary in the interest of the truth to correct Cowley's account of the League of Professional Groups—the most prestigious of the Party's fellow-traveling groups before the popular front. Despite my own doctrinal differences with the official Communist line, I played a leading role in its organization in the Utopian hope of being able to influence Communist party thinking from without. No sooner was the election of 1932 over, when, together with Lewis Corey and about a dozen other members, I suggested a series of membership meetings to consider some of the dogmas that we believed were contributing to the growth of reaction—nationally and internationally. When Hitler came to power we were more forthright in our criticism because we were convinced that these dogmas had heavily contributed to Hitler's victory. Our most impassioned opponent was Malcolm Cowley, who worked hand in glove with Joseph Pass and Joseph Freeman, the heads of the Party fraction in the League. Cowley implies that we were all Trotskyists. Only two of the group had such connections. Although I was unaware of it at the time, Corey was a secret member of the Lovestone Communist Opposition. The rest of us had no affiliation. Instead of reporting that the Party had decided to liquidate the League to prevent critical discussion of its dogmas, Cowley suggests that the League was killed off by "its dreary meetings," where he "listened impa-



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tiently to speeches about the betrayal of the Chinese Revolution of 1927." Cowley's memory here, as elsewhere, is seriously at fault. China was one topic that was never on the agenda. What he was impatiently listening to was our sustained critique of the theory of social fascism, according to which the socialists were the twins of fascists—a horrendous view that split the German working class and prevented a united front and resistance against the Nazis. What he also heard, with more than impatience, was a criticism of the communist theory and practice of dual trade unionism. I recall his turning to me and asking indignantly, "Who are *you* to criticize William Foster on trade union policy?" That was not the role of intellectuals according to the Party. Cowley must also have heard, if he attended that meeting, questions about the political wisdom of the Communist party slogan: "Self-determination for the Black Belt."

In his current retrospective account of the early thirties, Cowley claims to have harbored strong doubts about these very points (except the last, which he does not mention). He is particularly vehement in his claim to have been unhappy about the doctrine of social fascism which the Kremlin abandoned in 1935. Yet early in 1934, when the Communist party forcibly broke up the meeting of the Socialist party in Madison Square Garden that was called in support of the cause of the Austrian workers shot down by Dollfuss's Heimwehr, Cowley refused to sign the letter of protest sent by Dos Passos and others to the *New Masses.* Cowley explains: "I kept out of the dispute not having attended the meeting. . . ." This is disingenuous on its face. None of the other signers had attended the meeting. There was no dispute but an organized Communist riot. And was any Communist meeting ever broken up that Cowley failed to protest on the ground that he had not attended it? His claim that he was critical of the theory of social fascism at any time before the Kremlin abandoned it is, I submit, false. Likewise false is his statement that toward the end of the thirties, when he thought of the impending war, he "came to feel" that America "must" enter it. Like his colleagues at the *New Republic,* he definitely did not feel that way at the time.

Malcolm Cowley in a previous work sought to explain his differences with those of us who were critical of the Comintern line by saying that whereas we feared only Stalin, he feared Hitler. No one who listened to us even with half an ear—"this New York bunch of Jewish intellectuals," as we were contemptuously referred to by Communist party officials (although Lewis Corey, James Rorty, and John McDonald were not Jewish)—could have believed this. The main point of our indictment of the Party line was that it was helping Hitler to come to power and to stay in power.

The greatest service Cowley performed for the Communist party was his defense of the Moscow trials. His was the most extended and persistent attack on the defendants and was based, so he claimed, on a careful reading of the official proceedings. He dismisses the lack of any material evidence at the trials on the ground that it is contained in many volumes not made available to him but to the prosecution! He asserts that "the most improbable crimes, like the murder of Maxim Gorky and his son, are the best motivated and the most thoroughly substantiated." But the only evidence was poor Dr. Levin's confession. He accepts Tukhachevsky's guilt on the ground of "widely accepted rumor [*sic*]" from non-Soviet sources. Not only does he swallow whole Stalin's charge that Trotsky, Bukharin, and most of Lenin's other lieutenants were guilty of treasonable dealings with Germany, Poland, Japan, and the British intelligence service; he holds them responsible for such "mean and repulsive" crimes as "pouring nails and broken glass into eighty car-loads of butter, spreading corn beetles in the granaries, infecting horses with anthrax or cholera, and hogs with erysipelas. . . ." Even Communist party hacks were fearful of repeating these fantasies of Vyshinsky lest they provoke hilarity. Already in the case of his jeering review of George Kitchin's book on his experiences at the hands of the Soviet secret police, Cowley had endorsed its draconian policy against its victims. He acknowledges the innocence of Kitchin, the use of torture by his captors, and the essential truth of his story. But he dismisses this truth as "of a special sort"—the truth of a parasite (*New Republic,* 9/11/35). In going beyond the bounds formally observed by the Kremlin's inquisitors, who always insisted that their victims were guilty of the charges against them, Cowley reveals how total was his com-

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mitment to the Stalinist faith. He could serve it both as policeman and as poet.

Malcolm Cowley now confesses that he no longer accepts the validity of the Moscow trials. But he does not tell us when he changed his mind, and on the basis of what new evidence. This is most curious. Khrushchev's speech before the XXth Congress of the Russian Communist Party on Stalin's crimes made no mention at all of the Moscow trials. To this day there has been no rehabilitation of any of its numerous defendants, not even of Bukharin. As far as the public record goes, there is no more evidence available today on the guilt or innocence of the defendants than when Cowley reviewed the verbatim testimony. That testimony, however, was examined by the Commission of Inquiry into the Truth of the Moscow Trials, headed by John Dewey. On December 12, 1937, at the Hotel Center in New York, Dewey made a preliminary public report of the findings of the Commission, which revealed the complete baselessness of the charges against the defendants. He subsequently instructed me to send a copy of that report to George Soule, Bruce Bliven, and Malcolm Cowley, with whom he had corresponded when he resigned from the *New Republic* earlier in the year.

Although that report was in Cowley's hands before the end of 1937, on May 3, 1938, he defended the Moscow trials in the *New Masses* and impugned the integrity of the Commission. Then on May 18 and May 25 he repeated and endorsed, in the *New Republic,* the substance of Vyshinsky's accusations.

Could he have finally read the report of the Dewey Commission? However that may be, his memoir is not a true account of the intellectual life and struggles of the thirties. Among its many failings, it does not begin to explain the role of the Moscow trials in polarizing the American liberal community, their fallout in the Hiss case a decade later, and why "the dream of the golden mountain"—the universal brotherhood of workers and thinkers—turned into a totalitarian nightmare.

The question is not one of reliving the radical political conflicts of the thirties. All the embattled participants were guilty of failing to realize the promise of American democ-

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racy despite its imperfections—especially those who went whoring after false gods on whose bloodied altars millions of human beings had already been sacrificed. The question is one of historical truth, and why its continued distortion over the decades has gone unrebuked. Those who have hailed Cowley's book as authentic history have become accomplices in that distortion.

Closed to the Public

DICTIONARY JOHNSON: SAMUEL JOHNSON'S MIDDLE YEARS. *By James L. Clifford. McGraw-Hill. $17.95.*

Reviewed by LAWRENCE LIPKING

If Samuel Johnson were a designated landmark—and perhaps he is—this might be just the book to take on a tour around him. Certainly the late James L. Clifford has all the qualities we look for in a guide. He knows virtually every fact there is to know about his subject, especially the small, precise details that high-minded scholars often consider beneath them. He can tell us exactly how everything works, from publication to plumbing. He is never stuffy. He knows how to tell a story, and dishes out one anecdote after another (not only the old familiar fishy ones but a good many freshly netted). He expresses himself clearly. He is good company, and adept at performing introductions. He likes most people. He is very experienced. And without being obtrusive he conveys a quiet enthusiasm that carries us over the dull spots. Most readers, Johnsonians or not, should find the book a pleasant excursion. But one note of warning ought to be sounded: on this tour most of the inner apartments, those with the richest treasures, will not be found open for viewing.

Part of the reason why the doors are closed is simply that most of those treasures can be, or have been, seen elsewhere. *Dictionary Johnson* completes a project begun a quarter of a century ago with *Young Sam Johnson* (1955). In that pioneering work, Clifford set out to remedy the portrait made by Boswell—a portrait that, for all its vivacity, essentially draws the lines of a noble relic, Old Dr. Johnson. Four-fifths of Boswell's *Life* is devoted to the last twenty-one of Johnson's seventy-five years, or the two decades of their personal acquaintance. That is the Johnson of popular memory, the canonical, authoritative Johnson. But in many ways young Sam, with his crushing poverty, his black fits of depression, his often reckless courage, is even more interesting.

> There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the garret, and the jail.

Clifford's early biography ends appropriately with *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, the first work ever to bear Johnson's name on its title page (in his fortieth year!). The new installment picks up the story a few months later, with the opening of *Irene* (1749), and follows the respectable middle-aged author—*Mr.* Samuel Johnson—through his most productive period: the solid achievement of *The Rambler*, the triumph of the *Dictionary*, the distillation of *Rasselas*. When Boswell comes on the scene in 1763, Clifford takes his leave. He has earned a final bow. The completed project does exactly what it promised. Superimposing Clifford on Boswell, we now possess a fully documented chronicle of Johnson's long career, perhaps the best known literary life on record. At last the middle is in place.

Middles, unfortunately, tend to be less enthralling than beginnings and ends. Although Johnson's middle years were hardly free from worry and grief, including the death of his wife and a continuing struggle to hold himself together, they were not especially dramatic. In 1755 "patron" replaced "garret" in the couplet on the scholar's life; seven years later Johnson might have changed the word to "pension." His ills had become less desperate. Patrons and pensions can be aggravating, of course, but they do not chill the bones as much as being left out in the cold. Nor did Johnson undergo any clear-cut mid-life crisis. He suffered, by and large, from the same melancholy that had plagued him earlier and would haunt him later. Success did not resolve his tensions.

In some respects, in fact, this new book

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leaves its hero up in the air. The most obvious case is Johnson's proposed edition of Shakespeare, which we see him procrastinating about for seven years ("He for *Subscribers* baits his hook, / And takes their cash—but where's the Book?") and which would not be completed until 1765, two years past Clifford's deadline. Psychologically, too, the Johnson we view here is in a state of arrested development, awaiting (as hindsight tells us) the new stability that the Thrales would bring to his life a few years down the road. A reader who wants to know how the story comes out will have to return to Boswell—or Walter Jackson Bate.

Nor does this book pretend to show us the inside Johnson. Like a very good guide, Clifford points out to us the house where the great man lived—his chair, pictures of his cronies, his wig, his proof sheets, his toilet, his teapot—but hardly intrudes on his mind. The perspective is deftly external. Drawing on a wide variety of sources and eyewitness accounts, as well as a vast store of information about eighteenth-century culture, this book situates Johnson firmly in his contemporary landscape, or cityscape. We see the hero as other people saw him, against a background of daily life. Thus the opening account of *Irene* tells us less about what Johnson wrote or thought than about who came to the first night, what they wore, how they reacted, what the reviewers said—and even what else was playing in London that evening. Every scrap of evidence contributes to building the scene, and the result is a sense of immediacy that places us, with very little effort of imagination, among the spectators. A final touch completes the picture, as Johnson describes his withdrawal from the theater: "I soon laid aside my gold-laced hat, lest it should make me proud." The play once over, the props go back to their boxes.

Effects like these appear so easy that a casual reader might well overlook how much scholarship lies behind them. The chapter on Johnson's trip to Devon in 1762, for instance, is a brilliant tour de force of scholarly reconstruction. Johnson himself left no account; Joshua Reynolds, who accompanied him, left only a small engagement book. Yet Clifford, by piecing together many other bits of information—even the briefest visit by Johnson, after all, was something to write letters

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about, to insert in the local paper, or to embroider for one's grandchildren—has managed to chart the journey day by day, almost hour by hour. The anecdotes that Johnson could not help scattering in his path have now been retrieved. Only one thing is missing, the thing that makes the tour of the Hebrides so memorable: what Johnson himself thought of it all.

For some readers the issue may not seem crucial. Considering how much more attractive most people's outsides are than their insides, as Swift pointed out long ago, the current rage for getting inside not only the heads but the lower organs of our heroes may well seem a gruesome mistake. Even celebrities should have some right to privacy. In any event, some scholars would insist, Johnson's inner life remains forever closed to us (perhaps it was largely closed to him as well). The "inside" Johnson that so many people chatter about is only an illusion, projected by biographers out of their own fantasies and needs. Boswell needed a father to whom he could talk; he made one from Johnson. But we should not confuse such illusions with any actual person. The one part of Johnson that is not closed to us is the books that he wrote, so long as we open and read them. We should all resolve to do that. And if we must indulge in gossip or read biographies, better to have one that sets the facts straight, like Clifford's, than those that try to probe beyond their depths.

This argument makes a good deal of sense. The problem with it, however, is that no biography can avoid adopting a point of view and suffering the consequences. Even the title *Dictionary Johnson* pins a label on its subject, forcing us to picture him through his reputation or the eyes of his contemporaries rather than his own. Clifford has given us not a neutral but a social Johnson. Nor can it be denied that the figure has considerable charm. After John Wain's heroic hack writer and the mighty anguished soul of Bate, Johnson-the-man-of-his-times may come as a tonic. He is certainly less awesome, more fun to know. And if he also seems a little hollow, not every reader will mind.

Those with a taste for that inner, greater Johnson, however, will probably miss his presence in this book. The outside Johnson seems a smaller man. There are three reasons, I think, for this (doubtless unintended) effect. First, in polite society the manners of the great man, despite his marvelous conversation, could strike others as intimidating or odd. He did not wear a wig well, and sometimes preferred to talk to himself. Timid souls were advised to keep their distance. Certainly Soame Jenyns did. Squelched by Johnson in one of the most devastating reviews ever written, he prudently held his peace for almost thirty years, until the enemy was safely dead, and then produced the following epitaph.

> Here lies Sam Johnson:—Reader, have a care,
> Tread lightly, lest you wake a sleeping bear:
> Religious, moral, generous, and humane
> He was; but self-sufficient, proud, and vain,
> Fond of, and overbearing in dispute,
> A Christian, and a scholar—but a brute.

Clifford calls this "petulant," which is fair enough; a bear suffers no damage from the bite of a gnat. But the accumulated bites of a swarm of gnats are eventually very distracting, and can even make us lose some respect for the dancing bear. Clifford's book is full of gnats—the ordinary opinions of ordinary people. And Johnson is gradually nibbled down. Placed in a social context, some of his universality disperses into the crowd. We hear his voice in echoes.

Nor does Clifford attempt to define the uniqueness of Johnson. A second hollow space in this book is left by the absence of the writer's writings, the place where an author lives. Though Clifford obviously knows and appreciates the works, he chooses not to go inside them. Hence a reviewer's opinion, wherever possible, is substituted for his own. Even the critique of *Rasselas*, the longest in the book, depends on a comparison with *Candide* rather than an analysis of Johnson's own text or purposes. Some readers may find this modesty refreshing. Clifford does not consider his own ideas about Johnson more interesting than anyone else's, and he is quite willing to let us make up our own minds. Moreover, he constantly defers to the experts, allowing the last word on Johnson's psyche, for example, to the psychiatrists (in whose expertise he has more confidence, apparently, than I have). Like many good scholars, he would rather sound like a committee than an

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oracle. Yet the want of a unified theory about Johnson and his work is always felt.

The third reason why so much of Johnson seems to escape this book may be a paradoxical tribute to the scholarship itself: it tells us enough to make us aware of how much is still not known. Though a great deal has been written about Johnson's opinions of Fielding, for instance, this book reveals for the first time that Johnson and Fielding were once together in the same room. What did they talk about? Unfortunately no one knows. The fact remains stubbornly inert, arousing expectations that neither Clifford nor anyone else will ever be able to answer; our curiosity outruns our information. When Boswell first realized his opportunity to put Johnson's life on record more thoroughly than any life before, he whetted an insatiable appetite. That appetite is still growing. Biography after biography of Johnson vanishes into its maw, and leaves a public hungry for more. Nor have we seen the end. Many biographies to come, I fearlessly predict, will be based on the raw or partly cooked materials assembled by Clifford.

The final effect of a book like this, so rich and yet so incomplete, may well be to remind us how much of even the best known human life is closed to other persons. The problems of Clifford's biography embody truly Johnsonian themes: the vanity of human wishes, the hunger of imagination that preys on life, and sheer vacuity. The biographer works in the dark, surrounded by vacancies. Nor do most of us make good sources. We do not pay enough attention; we miss the clues. And the best part of what happens, of course, we do not remember. Consider the case of Mrs. Christopher Smart. According to her daughter, she often recalled a dinner spent in the company of Mr. Johnson. Here is what has come down to posterity from that occasion.

> The dinner consisted of two very large fowls and nothing else; neither vegetables, pastry, nor any other eatable, and of liquor not one drop. What seems more remarkable was that none of the company asked for any beverage. However, soon after the removal of the cloth the tea was served up.

The mystery of the menu is not explained,

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nor is there any account of the conversation. What Johnson said, what Johnson was, is absent. And there the matter rests. Perhaps this story does not do much to satisfy our hunger. But Clifford has made of it the best that he could.

The Burning of the Temple

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF ISAAC ROSENBERG. *Edited with an introduction and notes by Ian Parsons. Oxford University Press. $25.*

Reviewed by DAN JACOBSON

Isaac Rosenberg was killed in action on April 1, 1917, in the course of a German attack on the British front line in France. The company of which Rosenberg was a member had been withdrawn from the trenches the previous evening, after a severe mauling. The German offensive on that sector, however, continued to make such steady progress that volunteers were called to return immediately to the front. Rosenberg was among them.

Thus he can be said to have died a hero's death. A soldier's death, anyway. But it is no disparagement of his courage, or of his great gifts as a poet and painter (in the development of which he had always shown courage of a more than soldierly kind), to add that there is something grotesquely appropriate about the fact that his death occurred on April Fools' Day. Rosenberg was a remarkable artist; his growth was rapid and yet seems hardly to have begun when he was killed at the age of twenty-seven. But one cannot read the biographies which have recently been published, or some of the letters in this new, handsomely produced, all-inclusive volume without suspecting also that he was something of a type familiar in Jewish folklore: the schlemiel, the man for whom nothing ever goes right.

Only a schlemiel, one feels, would have joined the Army late in 1915, when it had become clear to all what kind of war was being waged on the western front—not because he was moved by patriotic zeal, or by adventurousness, or by a desire to share in the great experience of his generation, or by a random death wish, but for the money. Not money for himself, mind you, but for his poverty-stricken immigrant parents, in the East End of London, to whom he made over half his pay. (A bureaucratic muddle ensured that they did not get anything for some months after his enlistment.) Because he did not want to alarm his mother by telling her of his plan to enlist, he went to the recruiting depot with the clothes he stood in and a handkerchief in his pocket. Whereupon the Army failed to provide him with a uniform, or even with a towel, for far longer than he had expected. Because of the puniness of his stature, he was assigned to a special regiment of "scavengers" and "rabble" (his words) called officially "The Bantams." Because no one told him that the boots issued to him should be oiled before they were worn, his feet soon became horribly swollen and blistered. Because of "over-excitement" (his word), he celebrated a formal inspection of the regiment by tripping and falling in front of his colonel, and had to be sent to hospital with lacerated hands. He was constantly being given extra fatigues and duties because of "absent-mindedness"; his fellow Bantams stole everything they could from him; the officers and other enlisted men tormented him with anti-Semitic gibes.

Yet not the least extraordinary thing about Rosenberg was that after he was posted to France, and the danger and discomfort he had to go through increased to a degree scarcely imaginable, his letters became easier and calmer—one can even say happier. "His steadfastness and integrity," his present editor justly remarks, "shine through the letters with a brightness that increases as the years pass. They were features of his character that neither the rigours of life in the ranks . . . nor the ardours and endurances of the trenches could dim." Some critics have gone further, intimating that for Rosenberg the war could be thought of as merely the continuation of peace by other means (to adapt the famous maxim of von Clausewitz). Because he had scarcely known anything in civilian life but hardship, isolation, penury, and illness, he was able to write about the terrors and hor-

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rors of the trenches with a stoic sensitivity that was peculiarly his own, with a unique mixture of sardonic poise and passionate fellow feeling.

> They left this dead with the older dead,
> Stretched at the cross roads.
> Burnt black by strange decay,
> Their sinister faces lie
> The lid over each eye,
> The grass and coloured clay
> More motion have than they,
> *Joined to the great sunk silences.*

But it would be less than fair to all that was ambitious and appetitive in Rosenberg, to the energy of his work as a painter, and to his haste and eagerness as a poet, to see him purely as a foredoomed, willing victim who could find his true voice only in extremis. It would also, in some ways, be unfair to what was schlemiel-like in him, to his ironic, half-jocular appreciation of his own propensity toward misfortune. The face that looks out at us from the self-portraits reproduced in this volume is characterized by a guarded jauntiness, by an expression that reveals not so much self-esteem as a hunger for self-esteem. The letters and the poems reveal a man who was anything but withdrawn and ascetic by choice or temperament.

His painting rather than his poetry first seemed to offer Rosenberg an escape from the life of virtual pauperdom and psychic disharmony to which he was born. His father, a peddler and a dreamer who wrote poems in Yiddish and Hebrew, could neither earn a living nor get on with his wife. Brought up in a series of slum rooms and apartments, Rosenberg had to leave school at the age of fourteen to start earning a living. Through some unlikely strokes of good fortune, he managed to secure the interest of a couple of wealthy Jewish patronesses, who sent him to the Slade School of Art—then just about to enter that period of its history when it became a most influential center of English art. Rosenberg did not appear to get much out of his attendance at the school, and succeeded in forfeiting the goodwill of his patrons. Then he fell ill; it was feared he might contract tuberculosis. His family managed to scrape some money together to send to him to recover in the sunshine of South Africa. He was excited by the grandeur of the scenery of the Cape

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and appalled by the narrow minds of its colonial inhabitants:

> I am in an infernal city by the sea. This city has men in it—and these men have souls in them—or at least have the passages to souls. Though they are millions of years behind time they have yet reached the stage of evolution that knows ears and eyes. But these passages are dreadfully clogged up; gold dust, diamond dust, stocks and shares, and heaven knows what other flinty muck.

Having stuck it out for about six months, he returned to England, which was already at war. A collection of poems published at his own expense (it was his second such attempt to launch himself as a writer) failed to cover its costs. He sold a few paintings; he tried unsuccessfully to return to the menial job he had abandoned years before on going to the Slade School; with a friend he tried to start a magazine, *The Jewish Standard,* and failed again. Then he went to the recruiting office and there—I suppose it must be said—succeeded at last.

It all seems so wasteful. Yet only a bold reader, on going through the poems collected in this volume, could say that if *he* had been around then he would have been able to pick out this young man (rather than any other among the millions who were to be victims of the war) as one who would be remembered more than six decades later. Though Rosenberg was right in being "convinced I am more deep and true as a poet than painter," most of what is collected here is awkward, bathetic, fragmentary, derivative. One has the impression of haste and eagerness, as I have said. One also has an impression of Rosenberg's deep uncertainty about what kind of a poet it might be possible for him to become. He is obviously attracted, on the one hand, to the post-Tennysonian languors of the fin de siècle; on the other hand, he feels a desperate need to assert his otherness, his un-Englishness, even his un-Europeanness, as a Jew and the child of immigrants. The ploy to be adopted by a later generation of Jewish-American writers was not open to him: he could not flaunt his alienation and marginality as a mode of being truly "in," as the smart and up-to-date way of taking the world. In proud, imperial Britain of the first decade of the century that was just not a plausible or even a conceivable option. So he tried instead to adopt a Hebraic or prophetic pose: he wrote plays on biblical themes and plaintive songs about Jewish history.

Paradoxically, perhaps, in view of what he thought of the place, it was while he was in South Africa that he began to develop a distinctive voice—one that was neither wistfully beglamored nor bardic. He wrote a group of love poems which suggest the muscularity and dryness of the poems that were to make him famous posthumously. "Break of Day in the Trenches" and "Dead Man's Dump" (from which the lines quoted previously are taken) are deservedly the two of his poems which are most frequently anthologized, but he should not be thought of exclusively as a poet of the trenches. Even within the trenches he was striving to draw the unspeakable experiences he was going through into a relationship with everything he had known or divined beforehand about himself, about other men, and about the precarious nature of the civilization they had created. We can see this process at work most impressively in the poems that fuse those sights taking place directly in front of him with the farthest reaches of his historical imagination. Here the Hebraic themes and invocations no longer appear as hopefully contrived gestures or poses; instead they have been transformed into a mode of comprehension. As examples I think of "A Worm Fed on the Heart of Corinth," "Through These Pale Cold Days," and what is possibly the most impressive of all, "The Burning of the Temple." It is one of the very last things he managed to scribble down. In it, Jerusalem and the ghastly landscapes of the western front become one—and the great king, Everyman.

> What is this molten gold—
> Those thundering fires blown
> Through heaven—where the smoke rolled?
> Again the great king dies.
>
> His dreams go out in smoke,
> His days he let not pass
> And sculptured here are broke
> Are charred as the burnt grass
> Gone as his mouth's last sighs.

It remains to be said that this volume—which contains all Rosenberg's poems and letters and fragments of poems, reproductions of all his paintings and drawings known to exist,

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as well as the few passages of prose he attempted—has been comprehensively, indeed lovingly, edited and annotated by Ian Parsons. It is the second attempt to present to the public Rosenberg's collected works; now one can confidently say that the task will not need doing again.

The Small-Eyed Poet

DREAMS IN A MIRROR: A BIOGRAPHY OF E. E. CUMMINGS. *By Richard Kennedy. Liveright. $19.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

It could be argued that E. E. Cummings is America's most famous unread modern poet, especially if my own history of reading (or, more often, not reading) him is representative. As a college sophomore who had yet to hear of Wallace Stevens or William Carlos Williams, I nevertheless had pointed out to me, by an aspiring highbrow classmate who must have read them at Choate, several of Cummings's most anthologized poems. They were notable either for the boldness of their plain speaking (quite surprising for a youth in 1950 to encounter in lyric poetry), as in "come, gaze with me upon this dome" (which ended with "trumpets clap and syphilis") and "I sing of Olaf" (with its famous "f.ing" and "s." to be filled in). Or they called attention to themselves through typographical high jinks the likes of which I had never come across in the few poems I'd read. Beyond that, I must have run my eyes over others of his anthology lyrics, then gradually forgotten about him when the novelty wore off. He wasn't taught in courses, and in the process of discovering Yeats and Eliot and Frost I never made time for further exploration of Cummings.

Over the last thirty years his reputation has not increased, despite the *Complete Poems*, a biography, and other books about him. There has never been a satisfactory answer to R. P. Blackmur's charge, made in 1935, that Cummings's was a poetry of sentimental thrill, tough-guy talk combined with a repetitive vocabulary which featured words like "flower" in such a way as to deprive them of their histories, their meanings, their inner mysteries; while for Blackmur the typographical peculiarities were merely that—a convention to be mastered, then ignored. Mainly put down by New Critics (though, interestingly enough, Allen Tate wrote a measured appreciation of his virtues), Cummings has not been picked up by very many newer critics, of whatever persuasion. As for today's college sophomores, they show little interest in the poet, having been weaned, at Choate or elsewhere, on "Prufrock" or "Sailing to Byzantium" or "The Snow Man."

Richard Kennedy's biography of the poet provides no new arguments to justify his claim that Cummings is one of the leading American poets of this century. But the biographer's enthusiastic commitment to nearly everything about his hero is often infectious. (At one point Kennedy quotes Cummings's claim that Emily Vanderbilt "had the most

✪ WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD teaches English at Amherst College and is the author of *Seeing Through Everything: English Writers 1918–1940* and *Lives of the Modern Poets.*

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beautiful breasts of any woman he'd ever seen," then adds, "and he was a good judge of these matters.") One is also disarmed by the sheer effort which went into the book's making. When Mr. Kennedy in his preface—in which almost everyone in the United States is thanked—says he wishes he had space to acknowledge individually "the one hundred and fifty-six members of the Harvard Class of 1915" who answered his inquiries about Cummings at Harvard, I thought for a moment that some mad Nabokovian parodist was at the controls. But no. In fact, Kennedy's chapters on Cummings at Harvard, when the young poet was writing poems like "Fame Speaks" ("Stand forth, John Keats! On earth thou knew'st me not") are full of interesting detail and lore. Equally interesting are the early chapters on Cummings's life in Cambridge and his summers at Joy Farm, New Hampshire, under the tutelage and all-embracing love of his father, Edward Cummings, a Unitarian minister and Harvard professor.

Kennedy prints some lovely examples of the sixteen-year-old Estlin Cummings's entries in the Joy Farm logbook one year in March, when he and his father had gone up from Cambridge to do some carpentry. The biographer rightly finds them notable both for the affectionate feelings of the younger toward the older Cummings, and for their pure playfulness of expression:

> March 29: We lunched on soup—it was fine! and buttered shredded wheat things, toasted. They were awfully good but whiskery. I didn't recover from one whisker for some time. March 30: We closed the month and our stay simultaneously by completing the side of the new room—at least Dad did. After dinner on beanhamegg, Dad's "sensationally" satisfying invention, we cleaned up all shipshape and departed on snowshoes for the short-cut foot.

The log is eventually signed:

> E. Estlin Cummings
> President of the
> Boostem Serial Co.
> Butter Creek Mich.

Cummings must have been a very good boy, and the solemnly aspiring side of this goodness is most strikingly expressed in some sentences from a notebook statement made during his freshman year at Harvard: "I have a strong mind, a healthy body, resulting from years of careful and devoted watching by father and mother, and a high reputation, everywhere I go, as a gentleman. My friends are pure, high-minded girls and clean, manly fellows." He goes on to praise his father for exhibiting "toil" and "pluck" in his career. After such flights, Cummings had a lot to live down; thus the dirty talk and seeing-through-idealism character of many poems to be written by the man who was, early on, a disciple of Longfellow. Harvard corrupted him, as universities are wont to. He stopped taking his exercise at the gym, refused to wear long underwear in winter, became an infrequent bather (Edward Cummings insisted that "we can't all of us be honored by titles and degrees but we can all be Knights of the Daily Bath") and even took to hanging around Scollay Square, a late lamented spot in Boston where many fine young men have fed their inflamed imaginations. Cummings ceased to call on John Keats to "Stand forth," and began in his poems to use the lowercase "i."

Mr. Kennedy moves us along efficiently through Cummings's enlistment in the French ambulance service in 1917, his experiences in Paris, where he and Slater Brown cavorted with "women of the street," and his three-month internment by the French authorities—a seemingly marvelous experience which provided the materials for his first published book, *The Enormous Room*, still an impressive and lively work of prose. Much of the remainder of the biography deals with Cummings's three marriages, all to beautiful women (the book is filled with splendid photographs as well as Cummings's always capable illustrations), and with his later career as the resident of Patchin Place, Greenwich Village. Much of this later material can be of real interest only to Cummings devotees. Some of it is depressing, as when Cummings, toward the end of his life, refused President J. F. Kennedy's invitation to the White House on the grounds that he wanted nothing to do with the "Kennedy-Kulchur (Mick-kike) tie-up." His biographer refers to this outburst as "peevish," but there are perhaps less kind words for it.

In his remarks about Cummings's poetry,

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Kennedy often sounds stiff and awkward. He says of the concluding line to "the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls" (in which the "moon rattles like a fragment of angry candy"): "The moon, the only object of beauty in Cambridge, is neglected, as if it were the last undesirable chocolate in the box." Somehow, by bringing in the chocolate, Cummings's poem has been de-energized. Kennedy takes the starch out of "I sing of Olaf glad and big" by saying, primly, "Olaf has a special place in Cummings's pantheon of little people crushed by authority." And in order to defend what I think needs no defense—the funny sexual goings-on in "may I feel said he"—we're asked to think about how "the poems in a cumulative way express a totality of outlook," so that "we are then less inclined to regret Cummings's lack of taste." Of whose taste—Matthew Arnold's? On the contrary, any attempt to defend Cummings as really a fine moral sensibility is doomed to failure. Blackmur's judgment has not been overturned: "This is the extreme form, in poetry, of romantic egoism: whatever I experience is real and final, and whatever I say represents what I experience."

But we need not go on, with Blackmur, to deplore this romantic egoism as anti-intellectual and anti-intelligent. In the best recent appreciation of Cummings I've seen (which evidently Mr. Kennedy has not; at least he doesn't mention it), the English critic Clive James says that he "simplified and hardened his attitude to life until it supported him all by itself; he could stand up in it like a steel suit." This seems to me exactly the right note, and surely almost twenty years after Cummings's death—with romantic egoists on the scene whose pretensions make him sound, by comparison, almost classical—we are in little danger of being corrupted by his egoism. Clive James is also right in insisting that Cummings's true triumphs were sonic; that his love poems should be compared with Tin Pan Alley, both in their successes and their failures. Often with Cummings—and I've just confirmed it by going through the poems—the line between success and failure is thin indeed, perhaps dependent on nothing more than one's individual ear. There are no "right" poems to like, no prescribed order of rank and merit. Although I made a list of twenty or thirty which seemed particularly appealing, it might well be a different list on the next go-round. Probably he would have liked it that way.

Let us consider the following two stanzas from "voices to voices, lip to lip" as a motto for Cummings's life and his work:

i mean that the blond absence of any program
except last and always and first to live
makes unimportant what i and you believe;
not for philosophy does this rose give a damn. . . .

(While you and i have lips and voices which
are for kissing and to sing with
who cares if some oneeyed son of a bitch
invents an instrument to measure Spring with?

Maybe it was apt that he should have stood out in the 1950s when, at least so the myth has it, we were wary of standing out very much. And if you find, as I do, those quoted stanzas extremely attractive rather than the reverse, you will want to take a second look at Cummings's poetry in the 1980s.

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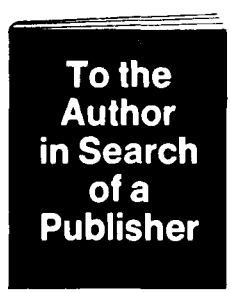

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The Reader Replies

The Machine in the Library

Ruth Gay's article, which appeared in the Winter 1979/80 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, contained some errors of fact which the Library of Congress would like to bring to your attention.

The Library of Congress was founded in 1800 (not 1815) by the act for the removal of the seat of government to Washington, which included a provision for a collection of books and a suitable apartment to house them. The original collection was almost totally destroyed when British troops burned the Capitol in August 1814; Thomas Jefferson, then living in retirement at Monticello, offered his library to the nation, and the Congress, after much debate, purchased it for about $25,000. Since Jefferson lived until July 4, 1826, the 1815 transaction was hardly, as Mrs. Gay describes it, a "bequest."

Librarian of Congress John Russell Young appointed Charles Martel as assistant to J. C. M. Hanson, head of the Catalog Division (not Librarian of Congress). Martel, who began work on December 1, 1897, first analyzed the old classification system to see if any of it could be salvaged, decided it could not, and proceeded to prepare a new classification schedule for Class Z, leaning heavily on Cutter's Expansive Classification. Young's successor, Herbert Putnam, was reluctant to adopt an entirely new system without further consultation with his staff and with other librarians, including Melvil Dewey and Charles Cutter, but agreed in 1901 that Martel's scheme should be fully developed. Martel's career at the Library, always in classification—he was for some years chief of the Catalog Division—lasted until his retirement on May 1, 1945. He died May 15 of that year.

The author makes a number of major and minor errors in her discussion of Library of Congress classification. A major error, for example, is the statement that all works on poverty are classed in HV. On the contrary, works about poverty and the poor are classed in many places, depending on the aspect described: HC for economic conditions, HN for social conditions, BL–BX for religion, and so forth. A minor error, for example, is her statement that Buddhism (in its relation to social problems) is classed in HN40.B8; the correct number is HN 40.B5.

Of more serious consequence, however, is that while she occasionally recognizes that changes in classification have occurred, she does not do so consistently. As a result, the reader at best is confused as to whether she is describing the original classification schedules or the most up-to-date versions, or at worst is led to believe that changes have not taken place when in fact they have. By citing changes made "in 1969," "in 1977," she leads one to infer that she has researched all numbers and captions to determine whether changes have been made. In fact, however, she failed to discover a number of significant changes. The caption "Abnormal sex relations" in HQ was replaced almost a decade ago by "Sexual life," and "Defectives" in HV was similarly replaced by "Handicapped." The Austro-Hungarian empire has been broken up, with Czechoslovakia given an entirely new classification. Poland has a separate set of class numbers outside of the Soviet Union, and Trieste has been classed with Italy, all contrary to her statements. As a result of her failure to investigate Library of Congress classification thoroughly and to state clearly whether she is describing past class numbers or present ones, she has not contributed to the scholar's understanding of the arrangement of books on shelves in libraries.

Her discussion of the disadvantages of the computer catalog is similarly confusing, posing a conflict between the computer printout and the bound book. To replace or supplement card catalogs, libraries are inaugurating computer catalogs which provide on the screen of a terminal all the information that now appears on a catalog card. In the existing catalogs of large research libraries, with their millions of cards, readers who misspelled Bollingen would be as much at a loss in the card catalog as the one before the computer she

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mentions. Readers at the Library of Congress who use the Library's SCORPIO system seem to find it easier to browse at a computer terminal than in the card catalog, which now extends from the Main Reading Room, into a hall, and then into a third location. It's a long walk from A to Z.

MARY C. LETHBRIDGE
Information Officer
The Library of Congress
Washington, D. C.

RUTH GAY replies: A number of correspondents have pointed out my error—in various tones of voice—on the founding of the Library of Congress and I apologize to my readers for it. On the question of the classification scheme, Miss Lethbridge's "corrections" indicate that she has totally missed the point of my illustrations. I was not instructing the readers on how to use the system, but was attempting to describe how the world looked—geographically, socially, and morally—when the Library of Congress scheme was composed. Indeed, certain of the changes she cites, such as the new number assigned to Trieste, only create difficulties for the library user. If Trieste-History is now DG 975 instead of DB 321 (transferred from Austro-Hungary to Italy), it means the reader will have to look in two places in the stacks instead of one. Whether the Buddhists, whom I used to show something about attitudes toward non-Christian religious groups, are HN 40.B5 (as they were in 1950) or .B8 does not change their place as "Special" in a Christian country.

Miss Lethbridge seems not to perceive that the world according to the Library of Congress is *still* arranged in the categories of pre-World War I. When, in 1977, the Library of Congress changed the name and number of Czechoslovakia (DB 200) to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (DB 2000), it left the Czechs lying securely in the embrace of the old Austro-Hungarian empire (DB), while Poland remains in DK (the prefix for Russia) although it has a new sequence of numbers.

When we consider the problem of the lost references due to misspellings, we are engaged in the metaphysics of degrees of lostness. A misprinted card, at least, has a corporeal existence, but a misplaced electrical impulse is evanescent. If a matching error does not conjure it up, it remains hidden forever.

And finally, if Miss Lethbridge will concede that at least some readers may prefer the catalog to the computer, I am ready to agree that we need the computer—breakdowns, errors, and all. I only hope that time and the engineers will improve it.

Oh, Mom, Poor Mom!

As a woman who has just finished packing away her go-to-work clothes in preparation for concentrating her energies, for now, on the growing of a child, I welcomed Isa Kapp's refreshingly positive attitude toward motherhood and toward commonsense parenting (Summer 1980). However, I found it very disturbing that in the process of justifying such a "radical" stance Kapp felt obligated not only to blame the unrest of the 1960s on parental self-consciousness but also to unbury the myth of maternal instinct and to oppose a reverence for motherhood on the one hand against feminism on the other, as though the two were antithetical.

Like Kapp, Dr. Spock, pediatric mentor to the parents of the young adults of the 1960s, was a champion of commonsense child rearing, yet somewhere I have heard him, too, blamed for the 1960s. Perhaps we were more rebellious than some other generations. No doubt there were psychoanalytic roots of some sort to this conflict, roots we have indeed hashed to death—if not, unfortunately, into oblivion—during the 1970s. Please let us not forget, though, that there were also social reasons for our discontent: unexamined racism and sexism, a tragic war, starvation in the midst of plenty both here and abroad. We were sometimes foolish, overzealous, overly self-righteous, even violent—we were young. We were also saddened, disillusioned, and embittered by the dishonesty and hypocrisy we had not been brought up to expect in either our parents or society at large. We failed to change things as much as we would have liked, of course, but I hope (and trust) my own unborn children will have the courage to keep trying. I cannot learn to see idealism as a fault.

As for "instinct," anyone trained in anthropology—which Kapp so freely adapts to the purpose at hand—cringes to hear the word applied to complex human behavior. Any feminist cringes to hear it used even in the near vicinity of a discussion of motherhood. As, among other identities, a social scientist with feminist leanings, I admit I find it difficult, therefore, to deal rationally with the maternal instinct question, which frankly I had thought dead some time ago, but I will try. What distinguishes Homo sapiens from other species, more than the use of language or of tools, is his reliance on what his society teaches him. Apparently as a result of our overgrown cerebral cortex, much more of our behavior is either learned or under our conscious control or both—in comparison with, say, Kapp's baboons. The information which most influences our behavior is transmitted culturally rather than genetically—thus the diversity and the

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flexibility of human social groups and the (albeit imperfect) rationality of man. Sex roles, for example, as Mead took pains to demonstrate, are learned, not instinctual, and vary tremendously from culture to culture. We have instincts still, very likely, but we also have self-consciousness, knowledge, and choice.

Feminism is only anti-motherhood to the extent that the recognition that motherhood is not the *necessary* choice for all women has required that it be taken down from its pedestal and evaluated coldly in the same light as other occupations, a maneuver that has certainly resulted in fewer resented children being born if nothing else. Striving to reject a heritage of oppression has sometimes resulted in a great deal of anger—some justified, some not—being heaped upon our parents (among others), and Kapp is correct that the notion that women can choose among alternatives to housewifery and motherhood has sometimes gotten mixed up with the notion that we must, to feel "equal" or "fulfilled," go to an office of some sort every day and make money. But let us not compound the confusion by asserting that, conversely, choosing to stay at home and nurture children for part of one's life is incompatible with what feminism is all about, the celebration of womanhood.

When the bitterness of women who feel they have been trapped by cultural stereotyping into roles they dislike has subsided, perhaps we will see a new social status for women begin to emerge. I hope it will include the freedom to be proud of being a mother without needing to disparage those who feel differently.

Susanna Hornig
North Las Vegas, Nevada

Isa Kapp replies: Since most of us are, as mothers or daughters, both very odd and very emotional, the subject seems to me more a matter for bemused speculation than for heated polemic. I was hoping, in fact, that I had steered it away from automatic ideologizing and social science jargon and am disappointed to have Mrs. Hornig's letter carry it back to those terms. I did say there was a connection between *some* parental attributes (I mentioned unwillingness to assume authority and lack of faith in themselves; the word *self-consciousness* did not come up at all) and the upheavals of the sixties. No doubt war and racism contribute to unrest in any period of history and indeed have been more intensely present at other times—but I was referring to the extreme generational hostility that erupted in the sixties. The spoiled dispositions, the expectations that demands be instantly fulfilled, the whole temper and manner of the protest were peculiar to that decade. I certainly think the relations between parents and children account for that more crucially than do universal disasters and injustices.

The word *instinct* was used just once, and I don't think reverentially enough to arouse consternation in anthropologists, some of whom believe it exists. I meant instinct to be understood as that feeling or sense of things which we have without being taught. We can recognize a fatherly or motherly one, an instinct for play, and an instinct for laughter. And if there is anything instinctual we can still muster, why not make use of it?

Not all feminists are against motherhood, but quite a few extremists and some media celebrities have been outrightly so; as a result, the effect of the movement has been to undervalue it. Why does Mrs. Hornig want to evaluate motherhood "coldly" among other occupations? It's not coequal with them in quality or centrality in our lives. An entire gender is equipped for it, as they are not, let's say, to become mathematicians or ballerinas. There seems to be a more general impulse for the creation and perpetuation of life than for most ways of earning a living—the desire to be a parent is a little deeper in the psyche. So, one might imagine, is the desire not to take onself too seriously. Or it should be, even if one is "among other identities, a social scientist with feminist leanings."

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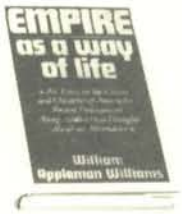

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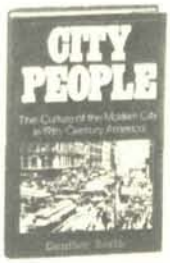

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